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**SYSTEM, METHOD AND COMPUTER PROGRAM PRODUCT FOR
BUILDING COST MATRICES IN A SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT
FRAMEWORK**

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to information storage and processing systems, and more particularly, relates to the management of supply chains using such systems.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Many types of manufacturing database management and inventory control systems exist today. Each of these systems views the process from the narrow viewpoint of the goals of such a system. For example, inventory control processes tend to determine when the inventory of an item is projected to be depleted and when to order goods to prevent such depletion. The inventory control process does not generally take into account the problems associated with availability of materials and machines to satisfy the inventory demand. On the other hand, the manufacturing control process considers the availability problem but does not take into account the effect of a sales promotion that will deplete an inventory faster than projected. A marketing department in preparing a sales promotion will often not consider the effect that promotion will have on availability, inventory and profit margin but tends to focus on sales goals. What is needed is a system that will support managers with each of these view points in understanding the effect of the various decisions that can be made on the supply chain as a whole both currently and into the near future.

Supply chain information flows today are fragmented, limited, and, in some cases, non-existent. The lack of timely communication between the different participants in the supply chain has resulted in higher costs for the system, for example, by limiting its ability to adequately measure distributor performance or to analyze promotion and new product activities, e.g., sales success, etc. In addition, the system continues to suffer from excess inventories and waste, unnecessary stock outs and rationing of products. A company cannot effectively react to these issues because the information that is needed to make sound management decisions is not available when it is needed.

10 From a marketing perspective, this lack of information has significantly hampered a company's ability to evaluate marketing tactics, post-program. Such companies also do not possess historical data that can assist it in developing marketing strategy and related plans, and understanding the essence of a brand.

15 Today, there is limited access to, and limited participation in, supply chain information systems by restaurants, franchisees, distributors, suppliers, etc. The infrastructure for supply chain information systems is inadequate. Restaurant point-of-sale (POS) systems are diverse and do not allow for data flows and the resulting analysis. At any point in time, it is not known how much product is selling, when it is selling or where it is selling.

20 As long as this situation is allowed to continue, activities throughout the supply chain will continue to be reactive, error-prone, time-consuming and costly.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A system, method and computer program product are disclosed for utilizing cost models in a supply chain utilizing a network. At least one item to be distributed is identified

5 utilizing a graphical user interface. A cost model is associated with the item utilizing the graphical user interface. The graphical user interface is then utilized to determine a time frame during which the cost model is valid. The cost model identifies a contract cost, an invoice cost, and a landed cost associated with the distribution of the item.

10 In one embodiment, reports for each of the items may be generated utilizing the cost model. In an additional aspect, at least one of the reports may be for a plurality of the items. In one aspect, the cost model identifies a source and a destination of the item. In another aspect, a plurality of the cost models may be available for being associated with the item. In a further aspect, the item may be identified and the cost model associated
15 with the item utilizing a network.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1A illustrates an electronic reporting and feedback system according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 1B illustrates an electronic reporting and feedback system for restaurants according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a flowchart of a process for normalizing data in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 3 is a flowchart of a process for reporting in a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 4 illustrates an infrastructure for web services according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a flowchart of a process for managing a supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 6 is a flowchart of a process for tracking a performance of distributors in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 7 is a flowchart of a process for tracking a performance of suppliers in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 8 is a flowchart of a process for tracking the performance of suppliers and distributors in a plurality of marketplaces in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 9 is a flowchart of a process for forecasting the sale of goods in a store utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Figure 10 is a flowchart of a process for inventory management utilizing a network-based framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- Figure 11 is a flowchart of a process for providing feedback on forecasting relating to the sale of goods in a store utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework in
10 accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 12 illustrates an integrated supply chain analysis model according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- 15 Figure 13 is a flowchart of a process for planning promotions according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 14 is a flowchart of a process for assessing market trends in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 20 Figure 15 is a flowchart of a process for collecting data to forecast sales in a supply chain in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- Figure 16 is a flowchart of a process for tracking the sale of goods in a store utilizing a
25 network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- Figure 17 is a flowchart of a process for cost reporting using a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present
30 invention;

Figure 18 is a flowchart of a process for forecasting the sale of goods in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 19 is a flowchart of a process for evaluating a success of a promotion utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 20 illustrates levels of integration between the supply chain coordinator and retail management;

Figure 21 is a flow diagram depicting integration ownership;

Figure 22 illustrates an electronic reporting and feedback system according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 23 is a flowchart of a process for raw product supply chain reporting in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 24 is a flow diagram illustrating basic communication and product movement according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 25 is a flow diagram illustrating advanced communication and product movement according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 26 illustrates a Sales Forecast Worksheet presenting historical data and projected data;

Figure 27 depicts a Promotion Monitoring Worksheet illustrating statistics such as variance from expected levels;

Figure 28 is a flowchart of a process for identifying goods in a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Figure 29 is a flowchart of a process for generating supply chain statistics in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 30 depicts a sample report for a distribution center;

- 10 Figure 31 illustrates a Data Quality report;

Figure 32 illustrates a distributor ranking report;

Figure 33 depicts a sample Supplier report;

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Figure 34 illustrates a Data Quality report;

Figure 35 illustrates a distributor ranking report that provides statistics on the number of orders filled, on-time deliveries, and perfect orders delivered;

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Figure 36 illustrates a Food Cost Summary report that compares the actual cost of food against a projected cost;

Figure 37 is a flowchart of a process for promotion reporting in a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 38 is a flowchart of a process for order confirmation in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 39 is a flowchart of a process for advertising in a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 40 is a flowchart of a process for advertising in a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 41 is a flowchart of a process for generating revenue utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 42 is a flowchart of a process for generating revenue utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 43A is a flowchart of a process for an auction function utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 43B is a flow diagram of a process for utilizing market demand information for generating revenue;

Figure 43C is a flow diagram of another process for generating revenue according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 43D is a flow chart of a process 4386 for risk management in a supply chain management framework;

Figure 44 illustrates an exemplary system with a plurality of components in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 45 is a schematic diagram of a hardware implementation of one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 46 is a flowchart of a process for providing network-based supply chain

5 communication between stores, distributors, suppliers, a supply chain manager, and a corporate headquarters in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 47 is a flow diagram of a process for providing network-based supply chain communication according to another embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 48 is a flowchart of a process for providing a restaurant supply chain management interface framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 49 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary supply chain coordinator web site start page in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 50 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary supply chain coordinator Members' Front Page in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 51 is a flowchart of a process for providing a supplier interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 52 is a flowchart of a process for providing a distributor interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 53 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary POS Implied Daily Usage – Distributor report that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 54 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary local promotion summary by distribution center report that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Figure 55 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary POS implied daily usage - supplier report that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 10 Figure 56 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary retailer landed cost verification report that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 15 Figure 57 is a flowchart of a process for navigating a user in a network-based supply chain management interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- Figure 58 depicts a high level view of ISCM communications according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention;

- 20 Figure 59 is a flowchart of a process for tracking the shipment of goods in a network-based supply chain management framework utilizing barcodes in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 60 illustrates the ISCM in the context of security and access management;

- 25 Figure 61 sets forth the members of the ISCM community and their relationship;

Figure 62 is a flowchart of a process for selecting suppliers in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 30 Figure 63 illustrates a multi-level, complex member organization;

Figure 64 is a flowchart of a process for contract enforcement in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 65 is a flowchart of a process for monitoring distributor activity in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 66 is a flowchart of a process for monitoring supplier activity in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 67 is a flowchart of a process for a bulletin board feature in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 68 is a flowchart of a process for a catalog feature in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 69 is an outline of an approach for mapping customers directly to solution design;

Figure 70 is a flowchart of a process for electronic invoice auditing in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 71 is a flowchart of a process for providing a network-based supply chain interface capable of maintaining the anonymity of stores in the supply chain in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 72 shows several applications for the web portal;

Figure 73 shows an expanded view of the portal from a security and access control perspective;

Figure 74 is a flow diagram showing how group and roles manage access;

Figure 75 is a schematic illustrating features and functions across web, network and system areas;

Figure 76 is a schematic diagram showing a validation of users on a web portal;

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Figure 77 graphically shows how user roles are managed in a multi-community environment;

Figure 78 illustrates a schematic showing the protection of resources with a central policy server, a separate user directory, and the integration of affiliate sites through an agent client;

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Figure 79 illustrates a policy based security architecture in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 80 is a flowchart of a process for a secure supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 81 shows a schematic with attribute setting through a web interface;

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Figure 82 illustrates a flow diagram for assigning default privileges;

Figure 83 shows a Zen diagram illustrating the intersection of privileges;

Figure 84 illustrates a diagram showing a system, supply chain member, retail manager, the supply chain coordinator, supplier, and distributor root nodes;

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Figure 85 illustrates another diagram showing groups within domains;

Figure 86 shows still another diagram showing hierarchies in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 87 shows a process for hierarchy management, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Figure 88 depicts a hierarchy in the supply chain portal management, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 89 illustrates the retail outlet manager as part of the supply chain coordinator hierarchy, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 90 is a schematic showing the process by which cross-domain access rights are granted;

Figure 91 is a diagram that shows a process flow for an administrative function;

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Figure 92 is a flowchart of a process for updating information in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 93 is a flowchart of a process for managing a health and personal care products supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 94 is a flowchart of a process for managing an electronics and appliances supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 95 is a flowchart of a process for managing a transportation equipment supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 96 is a flowchart of a process for managing a home products supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 97 is a flowchart of a process for managing a food and beverage supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 98 is a flowchart of a process for managing a machinery supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 99 is a flowchart of a process for managing an sporting good supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 100 is a flowchart of a process for managing a chemical supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 101 is a flowchart of a process for managing a department store supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 102A is a flowchart of a process for managing an office product supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 102B is a flow diagram of a process for managing a book supply chain utilizing a network according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 103 is a flowchart of a process for managing a gas station supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 104A is a flowchart of a process for managing a convenience store supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 104B is a flow diagram of a process for managing a toy supply chain utilizing a network according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 105 is a flowchart of a process for managing an entertainment media supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

5 Figure 106 is a flowchart of a process for managing an accommodation supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 107 is a flowchart of a process for a reverse auction in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

10 Figure 108 is a flowchart of a process for tracking damaged goods in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

15 Figure 109 is a flowchart of a process for allocating responsibilities in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 110 is a flowchart of a process for determining product supply parameters in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

20 Figure 111 is a flowchart of a process for reducing costs in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

25 Figure 112 is a flowchart of a process for handling contracts in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 113 is a flowchart of a process for centralizing a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

30 Figure 114 is a flowchart of a process for providing local distribution committees in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 115 is a flowchart of a process for price auditing in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Figure 116 is a flowchart of a process for auditing performance in a supply chain framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- Figure 117 is a flowchart of a process for providing an electronic mail virtual private network in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of
10 the present invention;

Figure 118 is a flowchart of a process for secret pricing in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 15 Figure 119 is a flowchart of a process for managing risk in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 120 is a flowchart of a process for product tracking in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 20 Figure 121 is a flowchart of a process for auctioning surplus products in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- Figure 122 is a flowchart of a process for managing a supply chain utilizing a network in
25 accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 123 is a flowchart of a process for managing a supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 30 Figure 124 is a flowchart of a process for disseminating calendar information in a supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 125 illustrates a graphical user interface for generating cost system components;

Figure 126 depicts a selection screen;

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Figure 127 illustrates an Add Items window displayed upon selecting Items from the Supply menu and New fro the selection screen;

Figure 128 illustrates a Landed Cost Report by Distribution Center;

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Figure 129 illustrates an Item/FOB button that calls up an FOB window;

Figure 130 depicts an FOB window;

15 Figure 131 illustrates a window for adding an FOB point;

Figure 132 depicts a screen for adding Distribution Centers;

20 Figure 133 is a flowchart of a process for creating cost system components in a supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 134 illustrates a matrix window for creating matrices;

25 Figure 135 illustrates a matrix that identifies the source and destination for a product in question;

Figure 136 illustrates an FOB matrix;

Figure 137 illustrates a contract matrix;

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Figure 138 depicts a Contract button;

Figure 139 depicts a minimum order matrix;

Figure 140 illustrates a shipping matrix;

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Figure 141 shows an Options menu;

Figure 142 illustrates a Notification toolbar button;

10 Figure 143 illustrates selection of a Multi-Item Price Notification;

Figure 144 is a flowchart of a process for utilizing cost models in a supply chain utilizing a network in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

15 Figure 145 depicts a New Item button;

Figure 146 illustrates a Contract/Buyer association screen;

Figure 147 depicts a contract schedule screen;

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Figure 148 illustrates a Generate button;

Figure 149 illustrates an Exhibit A button, which upon selection provides the Supplier with the "Approved Products" listing for the current contract;

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Figure 150 illustrates an Exhibit B button, which upon selection provides the detail on per case pricing and volume for each lane assigned to this Supplier;

Figure 151 shows a screen for selecting end dates to use on an exhibit;

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Figure 152 illustrates an Options drop down menu;

Figure 153 depicts an Exhibit C button for generating a report which lists product routing for each lane and any minimum order quantities;

- 5 Figure 154 is a flowchart of a process for creating a contract utilizing a supply chain graphical user interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 155 shows a Proposal submenu;

- 10 Figure 156 illustrates a Bid Proposal window used for generating a proposal;

Figure 157 illustrates toolbar buttons for adding, deleting and printing actions;

Figure 158 illustrates a page under the Items tab;

- 15 Figure 159 illustrates the page under the Items tab upon selection of the Search button;

Figure 160 illustrates a page under the FOB Price tab for selecting FOB price component worksheets;

- 20 Figure 161 depicts a window for managing Distribution Center usage;

Figure 162 is a flowchart of a process for creating a bid proposal utilizing a supply chain graphical user interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

- 25 Figure 163 illustrates a Templates button which calls a Template window;

Figure 164 depicts the Template window called by the Templates button;

- 30 Figure 165 illustrates a window displayed upon selection of the Templates tab;

Figure 166 is an illustration of a Microsoft Word menu;

Figure 167 is an illustration of the page presented upon selection of the Create Bid tab;

5 Figure 168 shows a Create Bid button;

Figure 169 illustrates a drop down list box from which a user can select reports for viewing;

10 Figure 170 illustrates a Print button;

Figure 171 depicts a Print Bid button;

15 Figure 172 is a flowchart of a process for proposal reporting utilizing a supply chain graphical user interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 173 depicts a Least Cost toolbar button;

Figure 174 illustrates a standard query screen;

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Figure 175 shows a Supply menu;

Figure 176 depicts a drop down list for changing Bid selection;

25 Figure 177 is a flowchart of a process for analysis creation utilizing a supply chain graphical user interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 178 illustrates a window displayed upon beginning an analysis;

30 Figure 179 depicts an option selection window;

Figure 180 illustrates a version button for creating new versions of analyses;

Figure 181 illustrates a verification window that appears upon selection of the version button;

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Figure 182 is a flowchart of a process for analysis version control in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 183 depicts a tab page for adding and removing FOBs from an analysis;

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Figure 184 illustrates a portion of the Item tab page;

Figure 185 is a flowchart of a process for editing supplier information in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 186 illustrates a page that is displayed upon selection of the Item/FOB tab;

Figure 187 shows an Update button for updating cost information;

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Figure 188 is a flowchart of a process for adding components in a supply chain management analysis in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 189 is an illustration of an exemplary analysis window displayed upon selecting a Capacity tab;

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Figure 190 illustrates another analysis window;

Figure 191 is a flowchart of a process for managing supplier sites in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 192 is a depiction of an FOB pricing window;

Figure 193 depicts an illustrative FOB Volume Pricing screen;

Figure 194 depicts a Supplier Volume Pricing window;

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Figure 195 shows a Delivered Pricing screen;

Figure 196 is a flowchart of a process for pricing in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 197 is a depiction of a Projected Restaurant Growth screen;

Figure 198 illustrates a Projected Usage Estimation screen;

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Figure 199 is a flowchart of a process for projecting distribution center usage in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 200 illustrates an Excluding Lanes screen displayed upon selection of a Lane

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Restrict tab;

Figure 201 is a depiction of a Forcing Lanes window;

Figure 202 depicts a message screen;

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Figure 203 is a flowchart of a process for restricting lanes in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 204 is an illustration of a Truckload Freight window displayed upon selection of a

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TL Freight tab;

Figure 205 illustrates an LTL Freight page;

Figure 206 is a flowchart of a process for managing freight in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 207 depicts a restriction window;

Figure 208 is a flowchart of a process for imposing regional restrictions in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 209 shows a Routing button;

Figure 210 illustrates a Report Selection window;

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Figure 211 is a flowchart of a process for product routing in a supply chain management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 212 illustrates a Solve button;

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Figure 213 illustrates the Report Selection window which allows selection of the report type;

Figure 214 illustrates a Report Name drop down list of related reports;

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Figure 215 illustrates another Report Name drop down list of related reports;

Figure 216 shows a Report Selection window;

Figure 217 depicts a report name drop down list;

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Figure 218 illustrates parameter entry fields for report generation;

Figure 219 shows a Retrieve button for retrieving a report;

Figure 220 is a flowchart of a process for comparison reporting in a supply chain
5 management framework in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 221 illustrates a Cost button;

Figure 222 is a depiction of a Cost Matrix Creation window;

10 Figure 223 illustrates the Formula Pricing submenu of the Supply drop down menu;

Figure 224 illustrates a Formula Pricing window;

15 Figure 225 depicts the page displayed upon selecting the Pricing Tab;

Figure 226 shows a message window;

Figure 227 is an illustration of another message window;

20 Figure 228 depicts a selection window to allow selection of the pricing data that the user
wants to copy over the current pricing;

Figure 229 is an illustration of the page displayed upon selection of the Freight Tab;

25 Figure 230 is a depiction of the page displayed upon selection of the Formulas Tab;

Figure 231 illustrates the page displayed upon selection of the Block Cost Tab;

30 Figure 232 is a depiction of the page displayed upon selection of the Adjustments Tab;

Figure 233 depicts toolbar icons used to insert or delete adjustments;

Figure 234 illustrates an RM Letter icon;

- 5 Figure 235 illustrates the Formula Maintenance window that is used to modify or add new formulas; and

Figure 236 illustrates a Formula Pricing submenu from which a user can open the Formula Maintenance window.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention allows participants in a supply chain for an enterprise or collection of enterprises to function as an integrated system. The Supply Chain model of the present invention is responsive and efficient, based on electronic access to critical information that is available when it is needed at various points throughout the Supply Chain. As a result the Supply Chain is highly flexible, reliable and user friendly, responsive to consumer demands, able to respond to short lead times and able to significantly lower Supply Chain costs.

The present invention positions a Brand for growth, competition and profitability by installing and managing the infrastructure that facilitates accurate, timely and relevant information flows throughout the Supply Chain.

The present invention overcomes traditional difficulties with supply chain information flows, namely that the flow of information is fragmented, untimely, and/or nonexistent. Further, the present invention overcomes deficiencies in prior art supply chain information systems such as limited access; limited participation; and inadequate infrastructure; which result in the unavailability of accurate, timely management information from Supply Chain activities; business decisions not being based on the best information; unfavorable impact on the cost of products; and error prone, time consuming, and costly activities throughout the Supply Chain.

The organizational structure, technology applications and information systems that form portions of the Supply Chain are enablers that allow for effective management of the Supply Chain. The methodology of the present invention provides the means to efficiently capture, analyze and feed back timely Supply Chain data to the appropriate parties.

The claimed invention is applicable to many different industries, including but not limited to, pharmaceuticals, health and personal care products, computer and internet

technology, automotive, home product supply, food and beverage, telecommunications, machinery, air conditioning and refrigeration, chemical, department store supply, office product supply, aircraft and airline related industries, education, consumer electronics, hotel, gasoline stations, convenience stores, music and video, etc. For purposes of illustration only, portions of the following description will be placed in the context of a Supply Chain for food services, including food distribution, retail outlet management and operation, and marketing. One skilled in the art will appreciate that the various embodiments and concepts of the present invention are applicable to a plethora of industries without straying from the spirit of the present invention. As such, the scope of the present invention is to be in no way limited to food services only.

Overview

The present invention includes a supply chain management system involving at least one supply chain participant. Supply chain participants include a supply chain manager. The supply chain manager may be a supply chain participant, a department of, division of or consultant for a supply chain participant, or an independent entity unrelated to the other supply chain participants. The supply chain manager may be allowed to exercise management rights without taking title or possession of any goods passing through the supply chain.

Supply chain participants may also include brand owners, point of sale outlets, point of sale outlet owners, a cooperative or consortium of point of sale outlet owners, distributors, or suppliers. Suppliers may supply one or more of finished goods, partially finished goods or raw materials.

The supply chain management system of the present invention includes six system components which may be integrated independently, on a parallel path, but ultimately are able to electronically interface with each other. Typically, a supply chain may include retailers, distributors and suppliers or equivalents thereof.

The supply chain management system according to one aspect of the present invention, increases the Quality Of Service (QOS) to supply chain participants, lowers costs and adds new value to supply chain participants with its "predictive" nature based on statistically driven models, discussed below.

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Supply chain participants, as used herein, refers without limitation to stores and other vendors/outlets, distributors, suppliers, etc. Further, suppliers include suppliers of raw, partially finished, and finished goods.

10 In general, the supply chain management system integrates various components, which components may include:

1. In-Retailer Systems
2. Retailer/Distributor Electronic Interface
- 15 3. Supplier/Distributor Electronic Interface
4. Data Warehouse
5. Information Services
6. Web Architecture and Internet Access

20 It should be understood that some or all of these components or analogous components may also be applicable to various industries including those industries set forth above.

Figure 1A illustrates an electronic reporting and feedback system 100 according to an embodiment of the present invention.

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In-Retailer Systems support point of sale outlet owners 102 with Point of Sale (POS) and BOH hardware and software solutions, and provide leadership in the evolution of retailer systems to ensure electronic connectivity to the Supply Chain. This component enables electronic data collection of daily menu item sales for the information database. It also
30 enhances retailer operations by providing retail outlet managers with tools that help free their time to focus on the customers.

Retailer-Distributor Electronic Interface establishes an electronic purchasing system and thus “electronic commerce” between POS outlets **104** and distributors /“direct” suppliers **106,108**. This includes electronic order entry (via Web or BOH), order confirmation,
5 product delivery/receiving, electronic invoicing, electronic wire payment transfers, data collection, and most important, contract compliance and distributor performance measurement, which assists in managing distributor performance.

Supplier-Distributor Electronic Interface facilitates the development of electronic
10 commerce between system suppliers and distributors including electronic ordering and confirmations, electronic invoicing and payments and electronic supplier performance measuring and reporting. Electronic commerce between raw material suppliers **110** and suppliers is also provided.

15 Data Warehouse **112** is a central collection point that electronically collects and warehouses timely, critical Supply Chain information for all Supply Chain participants. This includes distributor and supplier performance measures, representations of daily outlet item sales with translations to specified product requirements, and inventory levels, sales history and forecasts at various points in the Supply Chain, thereby providing a
20 basis for collaborative planning and forecasting. The data stored in the Warehouse is then available for quick, secure access.

Information Services analyzes **114**, organizes and feeds back Supply Chain data to meet the information needs of Supply Chain end users such as a brand owner **116**, the Supply
25 Chain Coordinator (SCC) **118**, retail outlet management **120**. This includes information on Supply Chain performance, collaborative planning and forecasting, promotion planning and inventory management. Services that benefit franchisees include electronic invoice auditing, distributor performance reporting, food cost reporting and analysis, franchisee sales/cost comparables, and other reports. Information Services also
30 determines a proper format in which to present the data so that it is in the most useful

form for the end user. It also works with Supply Chain users to develop/evaluate analytical/operational tools.

Web Architecture **122**—underlying all this electronic activity is technology, the web architecture with Internet access (through proprietary service or an Internet Service Provider (ISP)) that allows these electronic communications to take place efficiently and effectively. Encompassed in this component is the building of initial web applications and security for the Supply Chain.

Figure **1B** illustrates the electronic reporting and feedback system **100** of Figure **1A** adapted for restaurants according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention. In this situation, the POS outlet comprises a restaurant **126**, a franchisee **124** is the POS outlet owner, and end users include restaurant management **128** and other end users **130**.

Figure **2** is a flowchart of a process **230** for normalizing data in a supply chain management framework. A plurality of data types are defined with each data type including parameters in operation **232**. Data is received utilizing a network from a plurality of POS outlets of a supply chain that relates to an amount of goods sold by the POS outlets in operation **234**. A format of the data is verified against the parameters of the defined data types in operation **236** and any discrepancies between the format of the data and the parameters of the defined data types are corrected for facilitating an analysis of the data in operation **238**.

In one aspect, the corrections may be logged. In another aspect, the discrepancies may be displayed utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, discrepancies may be corrected by translating the format of the data in accordance with the parameters of the defined data types. In another aspect, the network may include the Internet. In an additional aspect, the corrected data may be displayed utilizing a network-based interface.

Figure 3 is a flowchart of a process **330** for reporting in a network-based supply chain management framework. Utilizing a network, data is received from a plurality of stores, distributors and suppliers of a supply chain in operation **332**. The data is processed in operation **334**. Subsequently, a request is received from a user for the processed data in operation **336**. The user is then identified as either relating to a store, distributor or supplier in operation **338** and the processed data is formatted based on the identification of the user as a store, distributor or supplier in operation **340**.

In one aspect, the format may includes a first format for the store, a second format for the distributor, and a third format for the supplier. In another aspect, the format may utilize a coding scheme unique to the user. In an additional aspect, the formatted, processed data may be made accessible via a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the network may include the Internet. In yet another aspect, the request may be received utilizing the network.

Figure 4 illustrates an infrastructure **400** for web services according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. As shown, application services **402** are at the core of the infrastructure. Secondary components include hosting services **404**, content delivery **406**, and network services **408**. Professional services **410** are provided for each of the components. Additional services can include support for electronic commerce, eMarketing, eSales, and eFulfillment.

Figure 5 is a flowchart of a process **530** for managing a supply chain utilizing a network. Data is received from a plurality of restaurants of a supply chain utilizing a network in operation **532**. This data relates to the sale of goods by the restaurants. An electronic order form for ordering a plurality of goods is then generated based on the data in operation **534**. The electronic order form is subsequently transmitted to at least one supply chain participant utilizing the network in operation **536**. For example, the form can be transmitted to a distributor of the supply chain utilizing the network via a restaurant-distributor interface. The electronic order form can also be transmitted to at least one supplier of the supply chain utilizing the network via a distributor-supplier

interface. Information relating to at least one of the operations in the above process for managing the supply chain is tracked by the restaurant in operation 538.

In one aspect, the data may be transmitted to the supply chain participants. In such an aspect, the data may be parsed to match each corresponding supply chain participant. The data may also be made accessible to the supply chain participant via a network-based interface. In another aspect, the data may be accessible to the supply chain participant only after verification of an identity of the supply chain participant. In an additional aspect, the tracked information may relate to each of said operations of the above process.

Figure 6 is a flowchart of a process 630 for tracking a performance of distributors in which a plurality of distributors are registered in operation 632. Data is received utilizing a network in operation 634. This data relates to the distribution of goods to a plurality of stores by the registered distributors. A performance of the registered distributors is then tracked utilizing the data in operation 636.

In one aspect, the data may include delivery dates associated with the goods. In such an aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the delivery dates with a plurality of target dates. As another aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the delivery dates with delivery dates associated with other distributors. In another aspect, the performance may be displayed to the stores utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the data relating to the distribution of goods may be received from the stores.

Figure 7 is a flowchart of a process 730 for tracking a performance of suppliers. In general, a plurality of suppliers are registered in operation 732. Data is then received utilizing a network in operation 734. This data relates to the supply of goods to a plurality of distributors by the registered suppliers. A performance of the registered suppliers is tracked utilizing the data in operation 736.

In an aspect, the data may includes inventory levels associated with the goods. As an aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the inventory levels with a plurality of target inventory levels. As another aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the inventory levels with inventory levels associated with other suppliers.

- 5 In another aspect, the performance may be displayed to the stores utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the data may be received from the stores.

Figure 8 is a flowchart of a process 830 for tracking the performance of suppliers and distributors in a plurality of marketplaces in a supply chain management framework. In operation 832, a plurality of distributors and suppliers are registered each in one of a plurality of marketplaces with each marketplace involving the supply and distribution of at least one of a plurality of goods used by a plurality of stores. Data is received utilizing a network that relates to the distribution and supply of goods to the stores by the registered distributors and suppliers in each of the marketplaces in operation 834. The received data is parsed based on marketplaces in operation 836 and a performance of the registered distributors and suppliers is tracked in each of the marketplaces utilizing the data in operation 838.

In one aspect, the data includes delivery dates associated with the goods. In such an aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the delivery dates with a plurality of target dates. As another aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the delivery dates with delivery dates associated with other distributors. In another aspect, the performance is displayed to the stores utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the data includes inventory levels associated with the goods. In such an aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the inventory levels with a plurality of target inventory levels. As another aspect, the performance may be tracked by comparing the inventory levels with inventory levels associated with other suppliers.

Results

The present invention makes critical performance information available to the Supply Chain system. The timeliness and level of detail of this information enable the supply chain coordinator to manage distributors and suppliers at standards prior art systems have been unable to achieve before. For example, timely performance information is provided
5 against which Supply Chain management (coordinator) can take immediate action. Such performance information includes system inventory levels and movement, ordering activity, order fill rates, on-time deliveries, and product quality issues. Note that the supply chain coordinator may or may not hold an ownership interest in the other supply chain participants. Further, the supply chain coordinator does not need to be associated
10 with the other participants in any way other than in relation to supply chain management.

Significant opportunities exist for Supply Chain participants to realize substantial savings and marketing opportunities through improved speed to market for promotions and more responsive inventory management.

Further, retailer management is given online access to the full Supply Chain database, subject to maintaining the confidentiality of individual franchisees/retailers. For the very first time, retail outlet management will be able to evaluate Supply Chain and retail outlet sales information to develop Brand menu and marketing program strategies. In addition,
20 another first, retailer management is allowed to evaluate the success of past marketing programs by comparing actual sales to forecasts and reviewing Gross Profit Margin analyses of programs.

According to an embodiment of the present invention, Supply Chain management is able
25 to provide online local promotion information to distribution centers, suppliers, Field Marketing, ADIs and Local Distribution Committees. This improves the speed to market for promotions and new products, as well as provides the ability to make ongoing program adjustments.

30 The advantages of being able to share and update a common data base at the convenience of all users provides enhanced coordination between all participants, improved planning,

less over-ordering and product waste, and less time spent managing and coordinating local promotions. For new contracted distributors, daily distributor invoice feeds can be established.

- 5 Franchisees are provided with many advantages. Tools are provided to evaluate and select new retail POS and BOH hardware and software systems for system-wide communication with their retailers, each other and with the Supply Chain. They are given the ability to order products and manage inventory electronically, and are given access to valuable management information and tools.

10

Retailers are provided with the ability to conduct efficient electronic commerce with distributors and “direct” suppliers. They are also allowed to communicate easily with the Supply Chain.

15 **Business Analysis**

- Figure 9 is a flowchart of a process 930 for forecasting the sale of goods in a store utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework. Data relating to a supply chain is collected in operation 932. The selection of one or more of a plurality of points in the supply chain is also allowed in operation 934 so that the data for the selected point in the supply chain may be analyzed in operation 936. Based on this analysis, a forecast is made of one or more aspects of the supply chain at the selected point in the supply chain in operation 938.

- 25 In one aspect, one of the points may be a store. In such an aspect, the data may reflect a sale of goods in the store. In another aspect, one of the points may be a supplier. In further aspect, one of the points may be a distributor. In an additional aspect, the forecast may be displayed utilizing a network-based interface.

- 30 Figure 10 is a flowchart of a process 1030 for inventory management utilizing a network-based framework. Data is received from a plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a

network in operation **1032**. This data relates to an amount of goods sold by the stores. A recipe associated with each of the goods is identified in operation **1034** and information on processed products required to produce the goods is then calculated based on the data and the recipe in operation **1036**. The information on the processed products is outputted
5 utilizing the network for managing the supply chain in operation **1038**.

In one aspect, the data may include an amount of the goods, and can be based on a function of menu demand. In another aspect, the recipe may indicate a type and an amount of the processed products required to produce each of the goods. In an additional
10 aspect, the information may indicate a type and an amount of the processed products. For example, the demand for beef can be calculated. In a further aspect, the information may be outputted utilizing a network-based interface. In yet another aspect, the network may include the Internet.

15 Back orders can be reconstructed. Also, key demand information is gathered directly from the store, greatly increasing accuracy and reducing response time.

Sales forecasting and inventory management are components in an embodiment of the Supply Chain management system. A theme of this model is transparent communication
20 of current (i.e. virtually real-time) and expected sales to some or all supply chain participants in a statistically meaningful distribution everyday for all inventory level products. In other words, predictive supply chain behavior can be determined and analyzed. Of course the counterbalance here is the commitment to maintain the confidentiality of the particular data source/franchisee.

25 Sales forecasting and analysis includes the accurate forecasting of menu items sales, monitoring system performance against forecasts, and communicating critical information to customers.

30 The sales forecasting and reporting subsystem allows Supply Chain management to develop, maintain and communicate sales forecasts to supply chain constituents

including, for example: 1) the franchisee community; 2) the distribution community; and 3) the supplier/manufacturing community. Some benefits of this activity include: 1) optimization of inventory levels throughout the supply chain; 2) improved logistics management; 3) improved production planning; and 4) improved promotion planning, including promotion marketing and execution. Further benefits include reduction in obsolete inventory cost, reduction in lost sales due to shortages, improved promotional decision making, reduction in supply chain cost through improved inventory and capacity management, and improved invoice averaging and revenue planning and reconciliation.

One aspect of the present invention provides an analytic model which enables a large and extended ecosystem, comprised of many similar but otherwise independent operating units, to quickly and inexpensively share near-real time data, with a trusted 3rd party, from a selected (and non-disclosed) sources, in a highly granular format, and then have extracted meaningful projections of future behavior for all of the other independent operating units so as to effect their purchase decisions. The combination of (a) confidential and very specific data, (b) accumulated quickly and cheaply, (c) shared to similar operating units, (d) leading to predictive supply chain decisions for the benefit of manufactures, suppliers, distributors and operators is a major benefit provided by the present invention.

Figure 11 is a flowchart of a process 1130 for providing feedback on forecasting relating to the sale of goods in a store utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework. Forecasting of at least one aspect of a supply chain is performed in operation 1132 based on a first set of data collected from a plurality of stores of the supply chain utilizing a network. The first set of data relates to an amount of goods sold by the stores. A second set of real-time data is collected from the stores utilizing the network in operation 1134. The second set of real-time data relates to the amount of goods sold by the stores. The second set of real-time data is compared against the forecasting in operation 1136 and the results of the comparison are fed back for facilitating supply chain management in operation 1138.

In an aspect, the results of the comparison are fed back utilizing a network-based interface. In another aspect, the results of the comparison include a percent difference between the first set of data and the second set of data. In a further aspect, the network includes the Internet. In one embodiment, the aspect of the supply chain includes sales of goods. In another embodiment, the aspect of the supply chain includes a demand of raw products required to produce the goods.

Overall Business Analysis Model

- 10 The sales forecasting and inventory management model is best described in the larger context of an integrated supply chain analysis model 1200, shown in Figure 12. This is done to reflect the fact that there are multiple customers of this information with different requirements. Sales forecasting and inventory management can be viewed as separate but interdependent analytic activities due to the core competencies, information, and
- 15 systems that are required to support each.

As shown in Figure 12, data such as menu item sales is collected in a database 1202. An integrity check can be performed prior to storing the data in a database. Various types of analysis are performed on the data and reports are generated by Report Management

20 1204 and are sent to participants in the Supply Chain, who may then distribute them to external customers. The analysis and reporting processes are described in more detail below.

Sales Forecasting and Inventory Management Process

25 Figure 13 is a flowchart of a process 1330 for planning promotions in which historical data is collected utilizing a network from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation 1332. This historical data relates to at least the sale of goods by the stores and can be further categorized based on seasonality, past marketing and/or advertising

30 support, etc. A promotion is then planned based on the historical data in operation 1334

and this planning is subsequently communicated to the stores utilizing the network in operation 1336.

In one aspect, the planning may be communicated utilizing a network-based interface. In another aspect, the network may include the Internet. In a further aspect, the promotion may be planned by coinciding a time frame of the promotion with a time frame reflected by the historical data. As a further aspect, the promotion may be planned by coinciding a start time of the promotion with a start time reflected by the historical data. In an additional aspect, the promotion may be planned by selecting an amount of ordered goods of the promotion based on an amount of ordered goods reflected by the historical data. In even another aspect, an impact of the promotion on a promotional item may be forecasted. Additionally, the impact of the promotion on a non-promotional item may also be forecasted.

Figure 14 is a flowchart of a process 1430 for assessing market trends in a supply chain management framework. A network is utilized in operation 1432 to receive data that relates to the sale of goods by a plurality of stores in a plurality of regions. The received data is tagged with a date on which it was collected in operation 1434 and then organized by region and dates in operation 1436. Market trends are then assessed utilizing the organized data in operation 1438.

In one aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the market trends are assessed via a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the market trends are assessed utilizing a graph. As a further aspect, the graph may include dates as one coordinate.

25

Figure 15 is a flowchart of a process 1530 for collecting data to forecast sales in a supply chain. Utilizing a network in operation 1532, data is received from a plurality of stores of a supply chain that relates to an amount of goods sold by the stores. Information is also collected in operation 1534 that relates to a plurality of variables such as weather, competitor activity, and/or a marketing calendar – which may include one or more of the following types of information: cyclical sales, seasonality, historical performance of same

or similar products, and elements of marketing support. The data is processed based on the information relating to the variables in operation 1536 and a forecast of sales is generated based on the processing in operation 1538.

- 5 In one aspect, the all of the variables (weather, competitor activity, and marketing calendar) are utilized. In another aspect, the information relating to the weather includes weather forecast. In a further aspect, the information relating to the competitor activity includes a forecast of a promotion of a competitor. In an additional aspect, the information relating to the marketing calendar includes a forecast of a promotion of the
- 10 stores. In one aspect, the network includes the Internet.

As part of the data needs analysis, there are three different processes that address the issue of improving supply chain performance during promotional periods. These processes are:

15

Zero tolerance - meaning that there was no tolerance for either excess inventories after the promotion, nor is it appropriate to run out of product during the promotion.

20

While supplies last - meaning that the promotion was active until each all of the product was depleted.

Estimated Usage Report (EUR) - this is similar to the current FOR process that is used for premiums purchasing.

- 25 One objective of the sales forecasting and reporting system is to provide timely information to the supply chain allowing for: production, inventory and logistics planning; reaction to deviations from plan as quickly as possible; and/or volume estimates in support of contracting processes.
- 30 According to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention, a sales forecasting methodology is based on weekly menu item sales information. These sales forecast are

all promotion centric, which is appropriate for this example, given that many businesses run promotions several weeks per year. The process begins with an analyst extracting appropriate comparative sales data based on the type of promotion. This data is formatted in a manner that allows analyst to observe the following data:

5

- National Promotion Description
- Advertising Commitment in GRPs
- Premium Promotion
- Premium Advertising Commitment in GRPs

10

- Date of Promotion
- Average Weekly Sales Volume during Promotion Period
- Average Daily Sales of Key Menu Items During Promotion

Based on this information, the analyst makes a best guess of sales increases and cannibalization impacts. This menu item sales forecast is then translated into product requirements at the distributor and manufacturer/supplier level and communicated to the system.

15

A preferred sales forecasting and reporting system provides weekly forecasts for management of product volumes during promotion periods. The forecast horizon in this example is 3-6 months and can be in terms of average weekly menu item sales, with a particular focus on promotions and cannibalization.

20

In a food service supply chain, for example, historical menu item sales information is available by restaurant by day for geographically distributed restaurants. Exogenous variables should include: promotion type, GRP's for promotion, any other concurrent promotional activities, seasonality, competitive environment, and other factors that can be identified.

25

Figure 16 is a flowchart of a process 1630 for tracking the sale of goods in a store utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework. Data is received from a

30

plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a network in operation 1632. This data relates to the sale of goods by the stores and is in a first format associated with the stores. This data is then sent from the stores to a supply chain manager (also known as a supply chain coordinator) utilizing the network in operation 1634 where the data is translated
5 into a second format associated with the supply chain manager in operation 1636.

In an aspect, the stores may include restaurants. In such an aspect, the data in the first format may include daily totals. These daily totals may reflect a price associated with the goods. As a further aspect, the data in the second format may include monthly totals. As
10 another aspect, the data in the second format may include a grouping of the goods.

Preferably, data collection and reporting is in a format that allows for derivation of product requirements to support forecasted menu item sales (i.e. how many boxes of hamburger patties are required based on menu item sales forecast). Actual sales are
15 tracked against forecasted sales on a daily basis and alerts are generated if the deviation is significant. Sales forecasting accuracy reports and post promotion analysis are provided. The sales forecast can be in a form that allows for gross profit analysis to be developed.

Some benefits to retailer outlets from the collection and analysis of information include
20 feedback of comparative and operation information including sales mix trends, actual and/or standard (or ideal) product cost, actual and/or standard (or ideal) gross margin, and comparable information from participating retailers on this information.

Supply chain providers benefit by having access “real- time” sales information. This drives efficiencies in two ways: 1) Management of promotional volumes and inventories,
25 and 2) Management of on going production planning. Regarding promotional volumes and inventories, supply chain providers are permitted to react faster by having sales information up to many weeks earlier than currently available. With respect to production planning, by having “real-time” sales information, suppliers are able to maintain lower safety stocks, improving capital efficiency.

30

Many of the benefits from “Integrated Supply Chain Management” are derived from the ability to deliver useful information for planning and operational purposes. The coordinator of the supply chain is given the information required to further optimize and decrease supply chain costs, especially for promotion management and risk management.

5

Figure 17 is a flowchart of a process 1730 for cost reporting using a network-based supply chain management framework. Data is received utilizing a network in operation 1732. This data relates to goods required by a plurality of stores including a product identifier parameter, and a first cost parameter. A second cost parameter associated with a franchise mark-up is also received in operation 1734 so that a total cost can be calculated based on the first cost parameter and the second cost parameter in operation 1736. The total cost is displayed utilizing the network with TCP/IP protocol in operation 1738.

- 10
- 15 In an aspect, the total cost may be calculated by adding the first cost parameter and the second cost parameter. In another aspect, the total cost may be displayed utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the data may be received from a plurality of distributors. In such an aspect, the data may relate to goods required by a plurality of stores from the distributor. In one aspect, the network may include a wide area network.
- 20 The sales and forecasting system can also provide longer-term forecasts, which supports contracting processes. The forecast horizon is variable based on contract needs, such as 1-5 years. The forecast can be in terms of retailer average weekly item sales. System level forecasts can be extrapolated from average weekly item sales forecasts. Historical item sales information is made available by retailer by day. Some exogenous variables
- 25 include: store count, comparable sales changes, and changes in sales mix.

Preferably, data collection and reporting is in a format that allows for derivation of product requirements to support forecasted item sales. Forecasts and reports can be distributed via the Internet in a fixed report format or Excel spreadsheet, for example,

30 depending on the recipient of the information.

Figure 18 is a flowchart of a process 1830 for forecasting the sale of goods. Data is received in operation 1832 utilizing a network from a plurality of point of sale outlets (e.g., retailers) of a supply chain where the data relates to an amount of goods sold by the point of sale outlets. The data is checked for errors in operation 1834. Each detected error is identified in operation 1836 as either a point of sale set-up error, a point of sale entry error, a back office error, a polling error, or a menu item mapping error so that the data can be corrected using the identification in operation 1838.

In an aspect, the network may include the Internet. In another aspect, the data may be checked for errors in real-time. In a further aspect, the identified errors may be logged. As an aspect, the log may be transmitted to the point of sale outlets utilizing the network. As another aspect, the log may be transmitted to a supply chain manager utilizing the network.

Figure 19 is a flowchart of a process 1930 for evaluating a success of a promotion utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework. Data from a plurality of stores of a supply chain is received utilizing a network in operation 1932. This data relates to the sale of goods by the stores. A time frame of a plurality of past promotions is identified in operation 1934 and the data for each of the past promotions is analyzed utilizing the associated time frame in operation 1936. The resulting analyses of the past promotions are then compared in operation 1938.

In an aspect, the stores may include restaurants. In another aspect, the past promotions may then be ranked. In a further aspect, the comparison may be displayed utilizing a network-based interface. In one aspect, the time frame may include a start date and a finish date. In an additional aspect, the data may include an amount of revenue associated with the sale of the goods.

To accomplish the forecasting and reporting objectives of the present invention, some integration may be required between the supply chain coordinator and retail management. Figure 20 illustrates potential levels of integration between the supply chain coordinator

2000 and retail management 2002. At the highest level, the two are autonomous. The two may share their own forecasts, or may collaborate to create forecasts. The ideal situation is one in which a separate business unit is supported by the two. This leverages resources, eliminates bias, joins forecasts and implications of results, and provides for sharing of knowledge.

Figure 21 is a flow diagram depicting integration ownership. As shown, data flows from business process and data collection points 2102 to integration points 2104. The definition of the integration point parameters are owned by the owners of the business process and data collection point of the same border style.

Data Collection

Figure 22 illustrates an electronic reporting and feedback system 2200 according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. As shown, data is received several of the participants in the Supply Chain and stored. Reports are generated and sent back to some or all of the participants. Also note that retail management 2202 and the supply chain coordinator 2204 are also allowed to perform their own analyses and provide feedback to other members of the Supply Chain.

Collection of Menu Item Sales

The primary element of forecasting is the communication of product movement throughout the system. Sales information can be received from suppliers and distribution centers monthly, weekly, daily, etc. Preferably, sales data from the POS by store is received daily, as it provides much more information regarding specific menu items and promotional items.

The collection and dissemination of this data allow both the supply chain coordinator and the franchisee to benefit by sharing sales information and sales forecasting. The system also benefits from improved supply chain performance. Further benefits include

providing franchisees with access to new reports on sales mix, food cost and distributor performance; and providing franchisees with a better understanding of menu sales mix on margins both in everyday situations as well as promotional situations. The supply chain coordinator, suppliers and distributors have access to virtually real-time sales, allowing
5 for improved management of inventory and improved sales forecasting. Margin management information improves the supply chain coordinator's decision making capability in the area of risk management and purchasing.

Figure 23 is a flowchart of a process 2330 for processed product supply chain reporting
10 wherein a network is utilized to receive data from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation 2332. The data includes a first set of information relating to an amount of processed product distributed to the stores and a second set of information relating to the sale of finished product by the stores. The network is also utilized to send the data from the stores to a supply chain manager in operation 2334 where a percentage of cost
15 attributable to the processed product is determined using the first and second sets of information for use at the supply chain manager in operation 2336.

In an aspect, the stores may include restaurants. In such an aspect, the processed product may include food. In another aspect, the first set of information may include an amount
20 of the finished product. In a further aspect, the second set of information may include an amount of the processed product. In one aspect, the percentage may be made available utilizing a network-based interface.

Historical daily menu item sales data on a per store basis is the preferred backbone for all
25 decision making and expanding analysis. Other causal information, variables that predict sales, can be collected and married with the menu item sales data to more accurately forecast. These variables might include weather, competitive information, marketing calendar, etc. Additional information such as menu item recipes can be used to further manipulate the data.

In a preferred embodiment, daily menu item sales data is received from restaurants on a per restaurant basis. This information is used to support the sales forecasting function and is used to report sales volumes to distributors and suppliers/manufacturers. Distributor level sales data is received on a weekly basis for all distributors, while supplier level sales data is received on a weekly basis for suppliers of "key products".

In order to best support real time supply chain management, access to information on product flow at the point of sale is provided on a daily basis. A representative sample of daily menu item sales can be collected if collection of all the data is not desired because of cumbersomeness, communications problems, etc.

Figure 24 is a flow diagram illustrating basic communication and product movement according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention. As shown, orders and products move back and forth between suppliers 2402, distributors 2404, and restaurants 2406. Daily menu item sales data is sent from the restaurants to restaurant management 2408, where it is compiled and forwarded to the supply chain coordinator 2410. The distributor sends periodic gross purchased by restaurant and item number to the supply chain coordinator. The supply chain coordinator also receives periodic invoice level sales data from the supplier.

Figure 25 is a flow diagram illustrating advanced communication and product movement according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention. Again, orders and products move back and forth between suppliers 2502, distributors 2504, and restaurants 2506. Daily menu item sales data is sent from the restaurants to restaurant management 2508, where it is forwarded to the supply chain coordinator 2510. The distributor sends invoice level sales information to the supply chain coordinator and receives daily product movement reports. The supply chain coordinator also receives invoice level sales data from the supplier and returns daily product movement reports to the supplier.

Figure 26 illustrates a Sales Forecast Worksheet 2600 that sets forth historical data 2602 and projected data 2604. Figure 27 depicts a Promotion Monitoring Worksheet 2700 illustrating statistics 2702 such as variance from expected levels.

Figure 28 is a flowchart of a process 2830 for identifying goods in a network-based supply chain management framework. Data is generated at a plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a network in operation 2832. The generated data relates to an ordering of goods required by the stores. The generated data is tagged with a numeric goods identifier common to a plurality of different supply chain participants in operation 2834. The generated data and the numeric goods identifier are communicated via the network to one or more of the supply chain participants that are capable of using the data and the numeric goods identifier for fulfillment of the order in operation 2836.

In one aspect, the numeric goods identifier may include a global trade identification number (GTIN). In another aspect, the generated data and the numeric goods identifier may be communicated utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the numeric goods identifier may actually be positioned on the goods. In such an aspect, the numeric goods identifier may be positioned on the goods in the form of a bar code. In another aspect, the generated data may be tagged by including the numeric goods identifier therewith. In yet another aspect, outlet information is communicated between the supply chain participants. Also, order information can be synchronized between supply chain providers.

Reports

Figure 29 is a flowchart of a process 2930 for generating supply chain statistics. Data is received utilizing a network from a plurality of stores, distributors and suppliers of a supply chain in operation 2932. Preferably, the data is received from less than all of the stores, distributors and suppliers to generate closely-controlled representative statistics. The data is sampled in operation 2934 and supply chain statistics are generated based on the sampling in operation 2936. The generated supply chain statistics are utilized for demand forecasting, advance planning, and/or volume tracking in the supply chain in operation 2938.

In an aspect, the sampling may be representative of a predetermined percentage of the stores, distributors, and suppliers. In another aspect, the statistics may represent sales of the stores. In a further aspect, the statistics may represent goods ordered by the stores. In an additional aspect, the statistics may represent a timeliness of delivery of the ordered goods by the distributors. In one aspect, the statistics may represent an inventory of the suppliers.

Distributor

- 10 Figure 30 depicts a sample report **3000** for a distribution center. Measurements of operation performance are provided in an Operations section **3002** and include warehouse outs, damages, mispicks, short on truck, and overlooked and not returned. A Purchasing section **3004** includes statistics in Out of Stock, Substitutions, and Out of Code fields. Other sections of the report preferably include Delivery Order Fill Rate, On-time
- 15 Delivery, Perfect Order Rate, and Price Compliance.

Figure 31 illustrates a Data Quality report **3100**. The report provides a comparison the following items to a group average: Bad Files, Late Files, No Files, and Time to Resolve.

- 20 Figure 32 illustrates a distributor ranking report **3200** that provides statistics on the number of orders filled, on-time deliveries, and perfect orders delivered, and whether they met the minimum required by the supply chain coordinator, retail management, or both.

25 *Supplier*

Figure 33 depicts a sample Supplier report **3300**. The report includes a Delivery Statistics section **3302** and other sections relating to Invoices and Inventory.

- 30 Figure 34 illustrates a Data Quality report **3400**. The report provides a comparison the following items to a group average: Bad Files, Late Files, No Files, and Time to Resolve.

Figure 35 illustrates a distributor ranking report 3500 that provides statistics on the number of orders filled, on-time deliveries, and perfect orders delivered, and whether they met the minimum required by the supply chain coordinator, retail management, or both.

Cost

Figure 36 illustrates a Food Cost Summary report 3600 that compares the actual cost of food against a projected cost.

Promotions

Figure 37 is a flowchart of a process 3730 for promotion reporting in a network-based supply chain management framework. Data associated with a promotion is identified in operation 3732. Included in the data is promotion item information, location information, and duration information. A projected daily usage of the promotion item is calculated for a plurality of locations based on the data in operation 3734 and the projected daily usage of the promotion item is outputted utilizing a network with TCP/IP protocol in operation 3736. Using this information, supplies can be shipped where they are needed, on a daily basis if need be. Further, the projected daily usage can be separated by region for statistical purposes.

In an aspect, each location may include a store. In another aspect, the calculating may include parsing the data based on location information and the promotion item, and dividing the data by the duration information. In a further aspect, the promotion items may include utensils. In yet another aspect, the promotion items may include food. In one aspect, the projected daily usage may be outputted via a network-based interface. In even another aspect, a projected daily usage of finished goods may also be calculated for the plurality of locations based on the data. Next, the projections may be translated into a

forecast of processed products required for the plurality of locations as well as into a forecast of delivery and storage parameters.

Confirmations

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Figure 38 is a flowchart of a process 3830 for order confirmation in a supply chain management framework. A network is utilized in operation 3832 to collect from a plurality of stores of a supply chain data relating to the sale of goods by the stores. Access is allowed to the data utilizing a network-based interface in operation 3834.

- 10 Electronic order forms are generated in operation 3836 based on the data for ordering goods from a plurality of distributors of the supply chain. These electronic order forms request a confirmation of the receipt of the electronic order forms. A determination is made as to whether the confirmation of the receipt of the electronic order forms is received from the distributors in operation 3838. If it is determined that the confirmation
- 15 of the receipt of the electronic order forms was not from the distributors, then an alert is generated in operation 3840.

- In one aspect, the confirmation is received utilizing the network. In such an aspect, the network may include the Internet. In another aspect, the alert is transmitted to the stores
- 20 utilizing the network. As an aspect, the alert may be displayed on the network-based interface. As a further aspect, the alert may include an electronic mail message.

Revenue Generation

- 25 The Supply Chain management system of the present invention creates, from its members, a web community with like interests. As a result, a number of different types of vendors may be interested in connecting to the site due to the captive audience comprising the web community, and because the community is a highly targeted audience with similar business goals/interests.

One area of revenue generation is collection of fees for advertising. Fees can be charged for such things as co-branding, local service and product providers, national providers of optional items/services, distributor specials, utilities, etc.

- 5 Revenue can also be generated by charging a fee to participants who buy and sell through the site, such as bakeries, soft drink vendors, coffee vendors, equipment vendors, consumers, restaurants, etc.

- Sales and services can also be a source of revenue. Potential sources can be utilities,
10 office products, computers, and equipment. Providing an auction service can also create revenue.

- A preferred embodiment of the present invention utilizes one or more of the following revenue models: investment in web site, charge per unit sold through site, exposures or
15 click through, or a combination of these.

Following are several processes for generating revenue.

- Figure 39 is a flowchart of a process 3930 for advertising in a network-based supply
20 chain management framework in which data is received utilizing a network from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation 3932. A supply chain participant is allowed to access the data utilizing a network-based interface in operation 3934. The supply chain participant accessing the network-based interface is identified in operation 3936 and advertising is presented to the supply chain participant in accordance with the
25 identification in operation 3938.

- In an aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the supply chain participant may be a supplier, a distributor, and/or a store. In such an aspect, the advertising advertises the sale of products required for the production of the goods
30 produced by the stores. As another aspect, the advertising may be conducted by at least

one of the supply chain participants. In an additional aspect, a charge may be required for the advertising.

Figure 40 is a flowchart of a process 4030 for advertising in a network-based supply chain management framework. Data from a plurality of stores of a supply chain is received utilizing a network in operation 4032. A supply chain participant is allowed to access the data utilizing a network-based interface in operation 4034. The data being accessed by the supply chain participant is analyzed in operation 4036 so that advertising may be presented to the user in accordance with the analysis in operation 4038.

In an aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the supply chain participant may be a supplier, a distributor, and/or a store. In such an aspect, the advertising may advertise the sale of products required for the production of the goods produced by the stores. As another aspect, the advertising may be conducted by one of the supply chain participants. In one aspect, charge is required for the advertising.

Figure 41 is a flowchart of a process 4130 for generating revenue utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework. A network is utilized to receive data from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation 4132. A user is allowed to access to the data utilizing a network-based interface in operation 4134. Offers are then made to the user to sell products from a third party that are related to the store utilizing the network-based interface in operation 4136. The third party is charged a fee based on a number of the products sold to the user utilizing the network-based interface in operation 4138.

In one aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the user may be a supplier, a distributor, and/or a store. In such an aspect, the products may be required for the production of the goods produced by the stores. In such an aspect, the advertising may be conducted by at least one of the users.

Figure 42 is a flowchart of a process 4230 for generating revenue utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework. Data is received via a network from a

plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation **4232**. A plurality of users are allowed to access the data utilizing a network-based interface in operation **4234**. The users are identified upon accessing the data utilizing the network-based interface in operation **4236** so that the users can be charged a fee based on a number of times the users access the data utilizing the network-based interface in operation **4238**.

In an aspect, the network includes the Internet. In one aspect, the users include suppliers, distributors, and/or stores. In another aspect, advertising is displayed on the network-based interface which advertises the sale of products required for the production of the goods produced by the store. As an aspect, the advertising may be conducted by at least one of the users. As another aspect, a charge is required for the advertising.

Figure **43A** is a flowchart of a process **4330** for an auction function utilizing a network-based supply chain management framework. Data is received via a network from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation **4332**. A plurality of users are allowed to access to the data utilizing a network-based interface in operation **4334**. A plurality of goods are displayed to the users accessing the data utilizing the network-based interface in operation **4336**. Subsequently, the acceptance of bids on the goods is allowed from the users utilizing the network in operation **4338**.

In one aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the users may be a supplier, a distributor, and/or a store. In a further aspect, advertising is displayed on the network-based interface which advertises the sale of products required for the production of the goods produced by the store. In such an aspect, the advertising may be conducted by at least one of the users. As another aspect, a charge may be required for the advertising.

Figure **43B** is a flow diagram of a process **4350** for utilizing market demand information for generating revenue. In operation **4352**, a supply chain manager is appointed for at least one buying supply chain participant. Such appointment can be made arbitrarily, by default, upon selection by the supply chain participant, etc. In operation **4354**, a grant of

authority is given to the supply chain manager to negotiate purchase agreements for at least one supply chain commodity on behalf of the at least one buying supply chain participant. One or more purchase agreements for the commodity are entered into in operation 4356. Each purchase agreement is between the supply chain manager on behalf of the at least one buying supply chain participant and a selling supply chain participant. A periodic analysis of commodity market price information is performed in operation 4358. Such price information includes information derived from an integrated supply management system for determining an effective price of the commodity. In the purchase agreement(s), a contract price that depends upon the effective price for the commodity is established in operation 4360 in circumstances where a determination of the effective price of the commodity has been made.

In one aspect, the supply chain manager is granted authority to negotiate purchase agreements for the at least one supply chain commodity on behalf of all buying supply chain participants. The commodity can be a raw material, a partially finished good, and/or a finished good. In a further aspect, the at least one purchase agreement establishes a contract price depending upon an actual market price for the commodity in circumstances where no determination of the effective price of the commodity has been made. In one aspect, an actual market price of the commodity is kept secret from the at least one buying supply chain participant. In another aspect, an identity of the at least one buying supply chain participant is kept secret from a supplier of the commodity.

One benefit of this embodiment of the present invention is that the supply chain manager may have greater information about market demand for various raw material commodities than a distributor, and may wish to benefit from the availability of this information. By fixing an "effective raw material price," the supplier is free to either take the required position (at no cost, since the contract price will be based upon the effective price), or take a contrary view, with the associated risk and benefit.

An additional benefit of this system is that the supply chain manager may exploit raw material information without: (1) disclosing confidential information beyond the fixed

price analysis; and (2) needing to include raw material suppliers immediately into the integrated supply chain models.

Figure 43C is a flow diagram of another process 4370 for generating revenue according to an embodiment of the present invention. A supply chain manager is appointed for a buying supply chain participant in operation 4372. In operation 4374, authority is granted to the supply chain manager to negotiate supply agreements between a selling supply chain participant and the supply chain manager on behalf of the buying supply chain participant. The supply agreement is entered into with the supply agreement having at least the following provisions: i) establishing a contract price for the good, and ii) requiring the selling supply chain participant to bill the buying supply chain participant at an invoice price to be determined by the supply chain manager in operation 4376. In operation 4378, an invoice price for the good is established at various times during the term of the supply agreement.

By controlling the invoice price, the distributor does not know the contract price of the supplier. Another advantage provided is that the supply chain manager can direct supplier to buy raw materials at a particular price based on supply and demand information gathered by the supply chain management system.

In one aspect of the present invention, the invoice price is collected from the buying supply chain participant(s). Preferably, the billing and collecting are performed at the direction of the supply chain manager. In another aspect, an overpayment to a selling supply chain participant for a commodity is reconciled by paying the difference between the corresponding contract price and the corresponding invoice price to the supply chain manager. In a further aspect, an underpayment to a selling supply chain participant for a commodity is reconciled by paying the difference between the corresponding invoice price and the corresponding contract price to the selling supply chain participant.

Figure 43D is a flow chart of a process 4386 for risk management in a supply chain management framework. In operation 4388, a supply chain manager is appointed for at

least one buying supply chain participant. Such appointment can be made arbitrarily, by default, upon selection by the supply chain participant, etc. In operation 4390, the supply chain manager is given authority to negotiate supply agreements for at least one good on behalf of the at least one buying supply chain participant. Note that the good may be a raw material and/or a fully finished good as well. One or more supply agreements are entered into for the at least one good in operation 4392. Provisions of the supply agreement include: (i) pricing for each one good shall be based upon factors including an actual market price of at least one commodity when the supply chain manager has not established a commodity position price; and (ii) pricing for each one good shall be based upon factors including a commodity position price of at least one commodity when the supply chain manager has established a commodity position price. Periodically, in operation 4394, a commodity position price is established through the supply chain manager, so that the supply chain manager may thereby address risks to the supply chain of varying market levels and market volatility of the at least one goods.

In one aspect of the present invention, commodity position prices can be established based on information including information derived from receiving data from a plurality of supply chain participants of a supply chain utilizing a network, the data relating to the sale of products by the supply chain participants.

In one aspect, the supply chain manager is granted authority to negotiate supply agreements for the at least one good on behalf of all buying supply chain participants. In another aspect, an actual market price of the at least one good is kept secret from the at least one buying supply chain participant. In a further aspect, an identity of the at least one buying supply chain participant is kept secret from a supplier of the at least one good. In yet another aspect, each supply agreement is between the supply chain manager on behalf of the at least one buying supply chain participant and a selling supply chain participant. In even a further aspect, the good may be an at least partially finished good. In an additional aspect, the determining may include the analyzing of data collected from a plurality of supply chain participants relating to the sale of goods.

Technology Overview

Figure 44 illustrates an exemplary system 4400 with a plurality of components 4402 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. As shown, such components include a network 4404 which take any form including, but not limited to a local area network, a wide area network such as the Internet, and a wireless network 4405. Coupled to the network 4404 is a plurality of computers which may take the form of desktop computers 4406, lap-top computers 4408, hand-held computers 4410 (including wireless devices 4412 such as wireless PDA's or mobile phones), or any other type of computing hardware/software. As an option, the various computers may be connected to the network 4404 by way of a server 4414 which may be equipped with a firewall for security purposes. It should be noted that any other type of hardware or software may be included in the system and be considered a component thereof.

A representative hardware environment associated with the various components of Figure 44 is depicted in Figure 45. In the present description, the various sub-components of each of the components may also be considered components of the system. For example, particular software modules executed on any component of the system may also be considered components of the system. Figure 45 illustrates a typical hardware configuration of a workstation in accordance with one embodiment having a central processing unit 4510, such as a microprocessor, and a number of other units interconnected via a system bus 4512.

The workstation shown in Figure 45 includes a Random Access Memory (RAM) 4514, Read Only Memory (ROM) 4516, an I/O adapter 4518 for connecting peripheral devices such as disk storage units 4520 to the bus 512, a user interface adapter 4522 for connecting a keyboard 4524, a mouse 4526, a speaker 4528, a microphone 4532, and/or other user interface devices such as a touch screen (not shown) to the bus 4512, communication adapter 4534 for connecting the workstation to a communication network 4535 (e.g., a data processing network) and a display adapter 4536 for connecting the bus 4512 to a display device 4538.

An embodiment of the present invention may be written using traditional methodologies and programming languages, such as C, Pascal, BASIC or Fortran, or may be written using object oriented methodologies and object-oriented programming languages, such as
5 Java, C++, C#, Python or Smalltalk. Object oriented programming (OOP) has become increasingly used to develop complex applications. As OOP moves toward the mainstream of software design and development, various software solutions require adaptation to make use of the benefits of OOP. A need exists for these principles of OOP to be applied to a messaging interface of an electronic messaging system such that a set
10 of OOP classes and objects for the messaging interface can be provided.

OOP is a process of developing computer software using objects, including the steps of analyzing the problem, designing the system, and constructing the program. An object is a software package that contains both data and a collection of related structures and
15 procedures. Since it contains both data and a collection of structures and procedures, it can be visualized as a self-sufficient component that does not require other additional structures, procedures or data to perform its specific task. OOP, therefore, views a computer program as a collection of largely autonomous components, called objects, each of which is responsible for a specific task. This concept of packaging data,
20 structures, and procedures together in one component or module is called encapsulation.

In general, OOP components are reusable software modules which present an interface that conforms to an object model and which are accessed at run-time through a component integration architecture. A component integration architecture is a set of
25 architecture mechanisms which allow software modules in different process spaces to utilize each others capabilities or functions. This is generally done by assuming a common component object model on which to build the architecture. It is worthwhile to differentiate between an object and a class of objects at this point. An object is a single instance of the class of objects, which is often just called a class. A class of objects can
30 be viewed as a blueprint, from which many objects can be formed.

OOP allows the programmer to create an object that is a part of another object. For example, the object representing a piston engine is said to have a composition-relationship with the object representing a piston. In reality, a piston engine comprises a piston, valves and many other components; the fact that a piston is an element of a piston engine can be logically and semantically represented in OOP by two objects.

OOP also allows creation of an object that “depends from” another object. If there are two objects, one representing a piston engine and the other representing a piston engine wherein the piston is made of ceramic, then the relationship between the two objects is not that of composition. A ceramic piston engine does not make up a piston engine. Rather it is merely one kind of piston engine that has one more limitation than the piston engine; its piston is made of ceramic. In this case, the object representing the ceramic piston engine is called a derived object, and it inherits all of the aspects of the object representing the piston engine and adds further limitation or detail to it. The object representing the ceramic piston engine “depends from” the object representing the piston engine. The relationship between these objects is called inheritance.

When the object or class representing the ceramic piston engine inherits all of the aspects of the objects representing the piston engine, it inherits the thermal characteristics of a standard piston defined in the piston engine class. However, the ceramic piston engine object overrides these ceramic specific thermal characteristics, which are typically different from those associated with a metal piston. It skips over the original and uses new functions related to ceramic pistons. Different kinds of piston engines have different characteristics, but may have the same underlying functions associated with it (e.g., how many pistons in the engine, ignition sequences, lubrication, etc.). To access each of these functions in any piston engine object, a programmer would call the same functions with the same names, but each type of piston engine may have different/overriding implementations of functions behind the same name. This ability to hide different implementations of a function behind the same name is called polymorphism and it greatly simplifies communication among objects.

With the concepts of composition-relationship, encapsulation, inheritance and polymorphism, an object can represent just about anything in the real world. In fact, one's logical perception of the reality is the only limit on determining the kinds of things that can become objects in object-oriented software. Some typical categories are as

5 follows:

- Objects can represent physical objects, such as automobiles in a traffic-flow simulation, electrical components in a circuit-design program, countries in an economics model, or aircraft in an air-traffic-control system.
- Objects can represent elements of the computer-user environment such as
- An object can represent an inventory, such as a personnel file or a table of the latitudes and longitudes of cities.
- An object can represent user-defined data types such as time, angles, and complex numbers, or points on the plane.

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With this enormous capability of an object to represent just about any logically separable matters, OOP allows the software developer to design and implement a computer program that is a model of some aspects of reality, whether that reality is a physical entity, a process, a system, or a composition of matter. Since the object can represent anything, the software developer can create an object which can be used as a component in a larger software project in the future.

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If 90% of a new OOP software program consists of proven, existing components made from preexisting reusable objects, then only the remaining 10% of the new software project has to be written and tested from scratch. Since 90% already came from an inventory of extensively tested reusable objects, the potential domain from which an error could originate is 10% of the program. As a result, OOP enables software developers to build objects out of other, previously built objects.

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This process closely resembles complex machinery being built out of assemblies and sub-assemblies. OOP technology, therefore, makes software engineering more like hardware

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engineering in that software is built from existing components, which are available to the developer as objects. All this adds up to an improved quality of the software as well as an increased speed of its development.

5 Programming languages are beginning to fully support the OOP principles, such as encapsulation, inheritance, polymorphism, and composition-relationship. With the advent of the C++ language, many commercial software developers have embraced OOP. C++ is an OOP language that offers a fast, machine-executable code. Furthermore, C++ is suitable for both commercial-application and systems-programming projects. For now,
10 C++ appears to be the most popular choice among many OOP programmers, but there is a host of other OOP languages, such as Smalltalk, Common Lisp Object System (CLOS), and Eiffel. Additionally, OOP capabilities are being added to more traditional popular computer programming languages such as Pascal.

15 The benefits of object classes can be summarized, as follows:

- Objects and their corresponding classes break down complex programming problems into many smaller, simpler problems.
- Encapsulation enforces data abstraction through the organization of data into small, independent objects that can communicate with each other. Encapsulation
20 protects the data in an object from accidental damage, but allows other objects to interact with that data by calling the object's member functions and structures.
- Subclassing and inheritance make it possible to extend and modify objects through deriving new kinds of objects from the standard classes available in the system. Thus, new capabilities are created without having to start from scratch.
- 25 • Polymorphism and multiple inheritance make it possible for different programmers to mix and match characteristics of many different classes and create specialized objects that can still work with related objects in predictable ways.
- Class hierarchies and containment hierarchies provide a flexible mechanism for
30 modeling real-world objects and the relationships among them.

- Libraries of reusable classes are useful in many situations, but they also have some limitations. For example:
- Complexity. In a complex system, the class hierarchies for related classes can become extremely confusing, with many dozens or even hundreds of classes.
- 5 • Flow of control. A program written with the aid of class libraries is still responsible for the flow of control (i.e., it must control the interactions among all the objects created from a particular library). The programmer has to decide which functions to call at what times for which kinds of objects.
- Duplication of effort. Although class libraries allow programmers to use and
10 reuse many small pieces of code, each programmer puts those pieces together in a different way. Two different programmers can use the same set of class libraries to write two programs that do exactly the same thing but whose internal structure (i.e., design) may be quite different, depending on hundreds of small decisions each programmer makes along the way. Inevitably, similar pieces of code end up
15 doing similar things in slightly different ways and do not work as well together as they should.

Class libraries are very flexible. As programs grow more complex, more programmers are forced to reinvent basic solutions to basic problems over and over again. A relatively
20 new extension of the class library concept is to have a framework of class libraries. This framework is more complex and consists of significant collections of collaborating classes that capture both the small scale patterns and major mechanisms that implement the common requirements and design in a specific application domain. They were first developed to free application programmers from the chores involved in displaying
25 menus, windows, dialog boxes, and other standard user interface elements for personal computers.

Frameworks also represent a change in the way programmers think about the interaction between the code they write and code written by others. In the early days of procedural
30 programming, the programmer called libraries provided by the operating system to perform certain tasks, but basically the program executed down the page from start to

finish, and the programmer was solely responsible for the flow of control. This was appropriate for printing out paychecks, calculating a mathematical table, or solving other problems with a program that executed in just one way.

- 5 The development of graphical user interfaces began to turn this procedural programming arrangement inside out. These interfaces allow the user, rather than program logic, to drive the program and decide when certain actions should be performed. Today, most personal computer software accomplishes this by means of an event loop which monitors the mouse, keyboard, and other sources of external events and calls the appropriate parts
- 10 of the programmer's code according to actions that the user performs. The programmer no longer determines the order in which events occur. Instead, a program is divided into separate pieces that are called at unpredictable times and in an unpredictable order. By relinquishing control in this way to users, the developer creates a program that is much easier to use. Nevertheless, individual pieces of the program written by the developer
- 15 still call libraries provided by the operating system to accomplish certain tasks, and the programmer must still determine the flow of control within each piece after it's called by the event loop. Application code still "sits on top of" the system.

- Even event loop programs require programmers to write a lot of code that should not
- 20 need to be written separately for every application. The concept of an application framework carries the event loop concept further. Instead of dealing with all the nuts and bolts of constructing basic menus, windows, and dialog boxes and then making these things all work together, programmers using application frameworks start with working application code and basic user interface elements in place. Subsequently, they build
- 25 from there by replacing some of the generic capabilities of the framework with the specific capabilities of the intended application.

- Application frameworks reduce the total amount of code that a programmer has to write from scratch. However, because the framework is really a generic application that
- 30 displays windows, supports copy and paste, and so on, the programmer can also relinquish control to a greater degree than event loop programs permit. The framework

code takes care of almost all event handling and flow of control, and the programmer's code is called only when the framework needs it (e.g., to create or manipulate a proprietary data structure).

- 5 A programmer writing a framework program not only relinquishes control to the user (as is also true for event loop programs), but also relinquishes the detailed flow of control within the program to the framework. This approach allows the creation of more complex systems that work together in interesting ways, as opposed to isolated programs, having custom code, being created over and over again for similar problems.

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Thus, as is explained above, a framework basically is a collection of cooperating classes that make up a reusable design solution for a given problem domain. It typically includes objects that provide default behavior (e.g., for menus and windows), and programmers use it by inheriting some of that default behavior and overriding other behavior so that the framework calls application code at the appropriate times.

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There are three main differences between frameworks and class libraries:

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- Behavior versus protocol. Class libraries are essentially collections of behaviors that can be called when those individual behaviors are desired in the program. A framework, on the other hand, provides not only behavior but also the protocol or set of rules that govern the ways in which behaviors can be combined, including rules for what a programmer is supposed to provide versus what the framework provides.
- Call versus override. With a class library, the code the programmer instantiates objects and calls their member functions. It's possible to instantiate and call objects in the same way with a framework (i.e., to treat the framework as a class library), but to take full advantage of a framework's reusable design, a programmer typically writes code that overrides and is called by the framework. The framework manages the flow of control among its objects. Writing a program involves dividing responsibilities among the various pieces of software

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that are called by the framework rather than specifying how the different pieces should work together.

- Implementation versus design. With class libraries, programmers reuse only implementations, whereas with frameworks, they reuse design. A framework embodies the way a family of related programs or pieces of software work. It represents a generic design solution that can be adapted to a variety of specific problems in a given domain. For example, a single framework can embody the way a user interface works, even though two different user interfaces created with the same framework might solve quite different interface problems.

Thus, through the development of frameworks for solutions to various problems and programming tasks, significant reductions in the design and development effort for software can be achieved. A preferred embodiment of the invention utilizes HyperText Markup Language (HTML) to implement documents on the Internet together with a general-purpose secure communication protocol for a transport medium between the client and the server. Information on these products is available in T. Berners-Lee, D. Connolly, "RFC 1866: Hypertext Markup Language - 2.0" (Nov. 1995); and R. Fielding, H. Frystyk, T. Berners-Lee, J. Gettys and J.C. Mogul, "Hypertext Transfer Protocol -- HTTP/1.1: HTTP Working Group Internet Draft" (May 2, 1996). HTML is a simple data format used to create hypertext documents that are portable from one platform to another. SGML documents are documents with generic semantics that are appropriate for representing information from a wide range of domains and are HTML compatible. HTML has been in use by the World-Wide Web global information initiative since 1990. HTML is an application of ISO Standard 8879; 1986 Information Processing Text and Office Systems; Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML).

XML (Extensible Markup Language) is a flexible way to create common information formats and share both the format and the data on the World Wide Web, intranets, and elsewhere. For example, computer makers might agree on a standard or common way to describe the information about a computer product (processor speed, memory size, and so forth) and then describe the product information format with XML. Such a standard way

of describing data would enable a user to send an intelligent agent (a program) to each computer maker's Web site, gather data, and then make a valid comparison. XML can be used by any individual or group of individuals or companies that wants to share information in a consistent way.

5

XML, a formal recommendation from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), is similar to the language of today's Web pages, the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). Both XML and HTML contain markup symbols to describe the contents of a page or file. HTML, however, describes the content of a Web page (mainly text and graphic images) only in terms of how it is to be displayed and interacted with. For example, the letter "p" placed within markup tags starts a new paragraph. XML describes the content in terms of what data is being described. For example, the word "phonenum" placed within markup tags could indicate that the data that followed was a phone number. This means that an XML file can be processed purely as data by a program or it can be stored with similar data on another computer or, like an HTML file, that it can be displayed. For example, depending on how the application in the receiving computer wanted to handle the phone number, it could be stored, displayed, or dialed.

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XML is "extensible" because, unlike HTML, the markup symbols are unlimited and self-defining. XML is actually a simpler and easier-to-use subset of the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML), the standard for how to create a document structure. It is expected that HTML and XML will be used together in many Web applications. XML markup, for example, may appear within an HTML page.

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To date, Web development tools have been limited in their ability to create dynamic Web applications which span from client to server and interoperate with existing computing resources. Until recently, HTML has been the dominant technology used in development of Web-based solutions. However, HTML has proven to be inadequate in the following areas:

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- Poor performance;
- Restricted user interface capabilities;

- Can only produce static Web pages;
- Lack of interoperability with existing applications and data; and
- Inability to scale.

5 Sun Microsystems's Java language solves many of the client-side problems by:

- Improving performance on the client side;
- Enabling the creation of dynamic, real-time Web applications; and
- Providing the ability to create a wide variety of user interface components.

10 With Java, developers can create robust User Interface (UI) components. Custom "widgets" (e.g., real-time stock tickers, animated icons, etc.) can be created, and client-side performance is improved. Unlike HTML, Java supports the notion of client-side validation, offloading appropriate processing onto the client for improved performance. Dynamic, real-time Web pages can be created. Using the above-mentioned custom UI
15 components, dynamic Web pages can also be created.

Sun's Java language has emerged as an industry-recognized language for "programming the Internet." Sun defines Java as: "a simple, object-oriented, distributed, interpreted, robust, secure, architecture-neutral, portable, high-performance, multithreaded, dynamic,
20 buzzword-compliant, general-purpose programming language. Java supports programming for the Internet in the form of platform-independent Java applets." Java applets are small, specialized applications that comply with Sun's Java Application Programming Interface (API) allowing developers to add "interactive content" to Web documents (e.g., simple animations, page adornments, basic games, etc.). Applets
25 execute within a Java-compatible browser (e.g., Netscape Navigator) by copying code from the server to client. From a language standpoint, Java's core feature set is based on C++. Sun's Java literature states that Java is basically, "C++ with extensions from Objective C for more dynamic method resolution."

30 Another technology that provides similar function to Java is provided by Microsoft and ActiveX Technologies, to give developers and Web designers wherewithal to build

dynamic content for the Internet and personal computers. ActiveX includes tools for developing animation, 3-D virtual reality, video and other multimedia content. The tools use Internet standards, work on multiple platforms, and are being supported by over 100 companies. The group's building blocks are called ActiveX Controls, small, fast components that enable developers to embed parts of software in hypertext markup language (HTML) pages. ActiveX Controls work with a variety of programming languages including Microsoft Visual C++, Borland Delphi, Microsoft Visual Basic programming system and, in the future, Microsoft's development tool for Java, code named "Jakarta." ActiveX Technologies also includes ActiveX Server Framework, allowing developers to create server applications. One of ordinary skill in the art readily recognizes that ActiveX could be substituted for Java without undue experimentation to practice the invention.

Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) is a basic communication language or protocol of the Internet. It can also be used as a communications protocol in the private networks called intranet and in extranet. When one is set up with direct access to the Internet, his or her computer is provided with a copy of the TCP/IP program just as every other computer that he or she may send messages to or get information from also has a copy of TCP/IP.

TCP/IP comprises a Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) layer and an Internet Protocol (IP) layer. TCP manages the assembling of series of packets from a message or file for transmission of packets over the internet from a source host to a destination host. IP handles the addressing of packets to provide for the delivery of each packet from the source host to the destination host. Host computers on a network, receive packets analyze the addressing of the packet. If the host computer is not the destination the host attempts to route the packet by forwarding it to another host that is closer in some sense to the packet's destination. While some packets may be routed differently through a series of interim host computers than others, TCP and IP provides for the packets to be correctly reassembled at the ultimate destination.

TCP/IP uses a client/server model of communication in which a computer user (a client) requests and is provided a service (such as sending a Web page) by another computer (a server) in the network. TCP/IP communication is primarily point-to-point, meaning each communication is from one point (or host computer) in the network to another point or host computer. TCP/IP and the higher-level applications that use it are collectively said to be "stateless" because each client request is considered a new request unrelated to any previous one (unlike ordinary phone conversations that require a dedicated connection for the call duration). Being stateless frees network paths so that everyone can use them continuously (note that the TCP layer itself is not stateless as far as any one message is concerned. Its connection remains in place until all packets in a message have been received.).

Many Internet users are familiar with the even higher layer application protocols that use TCP/IP to get to the Internet. These include the World Wide Web's Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), the File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Telnet which lets one logon to remote computers, and the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP). These and other protocols are often packaged together with TCP/IP as a "suite."

Personal computer users usually get to the Internet through the Serial Line Internet Protocol (SLIP) or the Point-to-Point Protocol. These protocols encapsulate the IP packets so that they can be sent over a dial-up phone connection to an access provider's modem.

Protocols related to TCP/IP include the User Datagram Protocol (UDP), which is used instead of TCP for special purposes. Other protocols are used by network host computers for exchanging router information. These include the Internet Control Message Protocol (ICMP), the Interior Gateway Protocol (IGP), the Exterior Gateway Protocol (EGP), and the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP).

Internetwork Packet Exchange (IPX) is a networking protocol from Novell that interconnects networks that use Novell's NetWare clients and servers. IPX is a datagram

or packet protocol. IPX works at the network layer of communication protocols and is connectionless (that is, it doesn't require that a connection be maintained during an exchange of packets as, for example, a regular voice phone call does).

- 5 Packet acknowledgment is managed by another Novell protocol, the Sequenced Packet Exchange (SPX). Other related Novell NetWare protocols are: the Routing Information Protocol (RIP), the Service Advertising Protocol (SAP), and the NetWare Link Services Protocol (NLSP).
- 10 A virtual private network (VPN) is a private data network that makes use of the public telecommunication infrastructure, maintaining privacy through the use of a tunneling protocol and security procedures. A virtual private network can be contrasted with a system of owned or leased lines that can only be used by one company. The idea of the VPN is to give the company the same capabilities at much lower cost by using the shared
- 15 public infrastructure rather than a private one. Phone companies have provided secure shared resources for voice messages. A virtual private network makes it possible to have the same secure sharing of public resources for data.
- Using a virtual private network involves encryption data before sending it through the
- 20 public network and decrypting it at the receiving end. An additional level of security involves encrypting not only the data but also the originating and receiving network addresses. Microsoft, 3Com, and several other companies have developed the Point-to-Point Tunneling Protocol (PPTP) and Microsoft has extended Windows NT to support it. VPN software is typically installed as part of a company's firewall server.
- 25 Wireless refers to a communications, monitoring, or control system in which electromagnetic radiation spectrum or acoustic waves carry a signal through atmospheric space rather than along a wire. In most wireless systems, radio frequency (RF) or infrared transmission (IR) waves are used. Some monitoring devices, such as intrusion
- 30 alarms, employ acoustic waves at frequencies above the range of human hearing.

Early experimenters in electromagnetic physics dreamed of building a so-called wireless telegraph. The first wireless telegraph transmitters went on the air in the early years of the 20th century. Later, as amplitude modulation (AM) made it possible to transmit voices and music via wireless, the medium came to be called radio. With the advent of television, fax, data communication, and the effective use of a larger portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, the original term has been brought to life again.

Common examples of wireless equipment in use today include the Global Positioning System, cellular telephone phones and pagers, cordless computer accessories (for example, the cordless mouse), home-entertainment-system control boxes, remote garage-door openers, two-way radios, and baby monitors. An increasing number of companies and organizations are using wireless LAN. Wireless transceivers are available for connection to portable and notebook computers, allowing Internet access in selected cities without the need to locate a telephone jack. Eventually, it will be possible to link any computer to the Internet via satellite, no matter where in the world the computer might be located.

Bluetooth is a computing and telecommunications industry specification that describes how mobile phones, computers, and personal digital assistants (PDA's) can easily interconnect with each other and with home and business phones and computers using a short-range wireless connection. Each device is equipped with a microchip transceiver that transmits and receives in a previously unused frequency band of 2.45 GHz that is available globally (with some variation of bandwidth in different countries). In addition to data, up to three voice channels are available. Each device has a unique 48-bit address from the IEEE 802 standard. Connections can be point-to-point or multipoint. The maximum range is 10 meters. Data can be presently be exchanged at a rate of 1 megabit per second (up to 2 Mbps in the second generation of the technology). A frequency hop scheme allows devices to communicate even in areas with a great deal of electromagnetic interference. Built-in encryption and verification is provided.

Encryption is the conversion of data into a form, called a ciphertext, that cannot be easily understood by unauthorized people. Decryption is the process of converting encrypted data back into its original form, so it can be understood.

- 5 The use of encryption/decryption is as old as the art of communication. In wartime, a cipher, often incorrectly called a "code," can be employed to keep the enemy from obtaining the contents of transmissions (technically, a code is a means of representing a signal without the intent of keeping it secret; examples are Morse code and ASCII). Simple ciphers include the substitution of letters for numbers, the rotation of letters in the
- 10 alphabet, and the "scrambling" of voice signals by inverting the sideband frequencies. More complex ciphers work according to sophisticated computer algorithm that rearrange the data bits in digital signals.

- 15 In order to easily recover the contents of an encrypted signal, the correct decryption key is required. The key is an algorithm that "undoes" the work of the encryption algorithm. Alternatively, a computer can be used in an attempt to "break" the cipher. The more complex the encryption algorithm, the more difficult it becomes to eavesdrop on the communications without access to the key.

- 20 Rivest-Shamir-Adleman (RSA) is an Internet encryption and authentication system that uses an algorithm developed in 1977 by Ron Rivest, Adi Shamir, and Leonard Adleman. The RSA algorithm is a commonly used encryption and authentication algorithm and is included as part of the Web browser from Netscape and Microsoft. It's also part of Lotus Notes, Intuit's Quicken, and many other products. The encryption system is owned by
- 25 RSA Security.

The RSA algorithm involves multiplying two large prime numbers (a prime number is a number divisible only by that number and 1) and through additional operations deriving a set of two numbers that constitutes the public key and another set that is the private key.

- 30 Once the keys have been developed, the original prime numbers are no longer important and can be discarded. Both the public and the private keys are needed for encryption

/decryption but only the owner of a private key ever needs to know it. Using the RSA system, the private key never needs to be sent across the Internet.

5 The private key is used to decrypt text that has been encrypted with the public key. Thus, if User A sends User B a message, User A can find out User B's public key (but not User B's private key) from a central administrator and encrypt a message to User B using User B's public key. When User B receives it, User B decrypts it with User B's private key. In addition to encrypting messages (which ensures privacy), User B can authenticate himself to User A (so User A knows that it is really User B who sent the message) by
10 using User B's private key to encrypt a digital certificate. When User A receives it, User A can use User B's public key to decrypt it.

Communication

15 Data collection and dissemination is preferably accomplished over a network such as the Internet.

Figure 46 is a flowchart of a process 4630 for providing network-based supply chain communication between participants in the supply chain such as stores, distributors, suppliers, a supply chain manager, and an office of the supply chain manager. Invoice
20 level sales data is transmitted from the supplier to the supply chain manager utilizing a network in operation 4632. Gross purchase data is sent from the distributors to the supply chain manager utilizing the network in operation 4634. Daily sales data is communicated from the stores to the office of the supply chain manager utilizing the
25 network in operation 4636 and total menu item sales data is transmitted from the office of the supply chain manager to the supply chain manager utilizing the network in operation 4638.

In an aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the stores, the
30 distributors, the suppliers, the supply chain manager, and the office of the supply chain manager communicate utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the gross

purchase data includes monthly gross purchase data. In one aspect, the supply chain manager manages the distributors.

Figure 47 is a flowchart of a process 4730 for providing network-based supply chain communication between participants in the supply chain such as stores, distributors, suppliers, a supply chain manager, and an office of the supply chain manager. Invoice level sales data is transmitted from the supplier to the supply chain manager utilizing a network in operation 4732. Invoice level sales data is sent from the distributors to the supply chain manager utilizing the network in operation 4734. Daily sales data is communicated from the stores to the office of the supply chain manager utilizing the network in operation 4736. Daily sales data is transmitted from the office of the supply chain manager to the supply chain manager utilizing the network in operation 4738. The daily sales data is organized based on the stores from which the daily sales data originated.

In one aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the stores, the distributors, the suppliers, the supply chain manager, and the office of the supply chain manager communicate utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the gross purchase data includes monthly gross purchase data. In an additional aspect, the supply chain manager manages the distributors.

E-Mail Capability

An E-mail system can be used to report information if external mail capabilities that support the Internet are present. Any existing Internet account can be used, as can one from a value added service provider (e.g. America On-line, Compuser, Microsoft Network, etc.). If there are no existing E-Mail capabilities, an account can be established with an Internet Service Provider.

SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) is a TCP/IP protocol used in sending and receiving e-mail. However, since it's limited in its ability to queue messages at the

receiving end, it's usually used with one of two other protocols, POP3 or Internet Message Access Protocol, that let the user save messages in a server mailbox and download them periodically from the server. In other words, users typically use a program that uses SMTP for sending e-mail and either POP3 or IMAP for receiving

5 messages that have been received for them at their local server. Most mail programs such as Eudora let you specify both an SMTP server and a POP server. On UNIX-based systems, sendmail is the most widely-used SMTP server for e-mail. A commercial package, Sendmail, includes a POP3 server and also comes in a version for Windows NT.

10 The next step is testing E-mail connectivity by sending a message to Supply Chain management's Test Mailbox. A response is made (via other communications means) in the event the E-mail transmission is not received. A reply to the message via E-mail is made once successfully received. As an option, a file attachment (any text-ASCII file) can be included to verify the ability to send messages with separate file attachments.

15 After receiving confirmation concerning a successful Test Message, an actual data file (created from the *Franchisee Information Layout* section, below) is sent to the TEST Mailbox. After receiving confirmation concerning successful processing of the Test data, a notification is sent to begin Production reporting according to the reporting period

20 specified in the *Franchisee Information Layout* section.

Franchisee Information Layout

Table 1 sets forth Illustrative daily POS data elements

Table 1

Fld #	Data Element Name	Type	Size	Column(s)	Example	Req
00	Record Type	ID	3	001-003	FR1	M
01	Item Number	ID	10	004-013	12645	M

02	Item Description	AN	20	014-033	burger patty	M
03	Period Date	DT	8	034-041	19990601	M
04	Retail Outlet Number	ID	4	042-045	0107	M
05	Total Sales \$	N2	6	046-051	3264.50	M
06	Total Quantity	NO	5	052-056	1034	M

Example: This example should be one line. Field justification is irrelevant.

	1	2	3	4	5
5	1234567890123456789012345678901234567890123456				
	FR112645	whopper patty		1999060101073264501034	

General Implementation Information

10 The following information is a guideline for the requested data files.

Record Type:

15 All records that are similar are considered a logical group of data. Each record in a group has a unique identifier called a Record Type consisting of three alphanumeric characters. This should be placed before the first field of each record (see the Example above in the *Franchisee Information Layout* section), and repeated on each row.

Field:

20

A Field can represent a qualifier, a value, or text (such as a description). A Field can be thought of as a piece of data.

Record:

25

Each row of data is a Record. To allow for future expansion, Records can be padded to any length.

Field Number:

5

Based upon the sequential position assignment of a Field in the Record, each Field assumes a unique or numeric location for each Record. The value of the FLD# column represents the position within the Record where the individual Field appears (i.e., FLD#01 will be the first Field following the Record Type, FLD#02 will be the second Field following the Record Type, etc.).

10

Fields:

Fields can be either left or right justified. The Record Type should always precede the first field. All Fields should completely fill their column sizes (pad with spaces).

15

Field Types:

AN Alpha/Numeric - Should not be enclosed in quotes (e.g. FXD-4543).

20

Nn Numeric with n decimal places - Symbolized by the two-position representation Nn. N indicates a numeric, and n indicates the decimal places to the right of a fixed decimal point. This should not contain dollar signs or commas, but may contain decimal points (e.g. N2 for \$4,255.50 is 4255.50; N0 for \$4,255.50 is 4256). This should be rounded to the respective decimal place (e.g. N2 for \$4,255.506 is 4255.51). For negative values, a leading minus sign (-) is used (e.g. N2 for \$-12.42 is -12.42). Left-padding with zeroes is optional (e.g. 4532 could be either 4532 or 004532).

25

30

ID Identifier Value - May contain alpha/numeric data restricted to a list of possible values.

5 DT Date Value - Format for the date type is CCYYMMDD, where CC indicates century, YY is the last two digits of the year (00-99), MM is the numeric value of the month (01-12), and DD is the numeric value of the day (01-31).

10 TM Time Value - Format for the time type is HHMMSS. HH is the numeric expression of the hour (00-23), MM is the numeric expression of the minute (00-59), SS is the numeric expression of the second (00-59), and d.d is the numeric expression of the decimal seconds. This fields may be relevant for EDI formats.

15 Size:

The minus sign and the decimal point are counted when determining the length of the data element (Field) value.

20 Column(s):

Specifies the column numbers allocated to a particular Field.

Requirement (Req):

25	M	-	Mandatory	This field must be present
	C	-	Conditional	This field is present based on a condition
	O	-	Optional	This field may become Mandatory or
	R	-	Reserved	Reserved for future use

30 File Format.

All files can be requested in a fixed-length ASCII format. Programmatically, these are simple to produce. Many PC applications include an export utility which allows specification of column widths and formats. When using spreadsheet applications, column widths and formats may have to be pre-set to produce the desired results. Empty
5 Fields can be filled with spaces.

Compression.

Files can be compressed. Compressing files will typically reduce file sizes to some 20%
10 of their initial size. Preferably, the system supports the use of ZIP files created from a PC. Before transmission, all files would be compressed into one ZIP file using PKZIP, a file compression package available from most software sources.

Secure Web Portal

15

Figure 48 is a flowchart of a process 4830 for providing a restaurant supply chain management interface framework. A user is allowed to link to a plurality of restaurant interfaces including information relating to at least one distributor in operation 4832. One or more distributor links are then displayed on each restaurant interface in operation
20 4834 with each distributor link capable of linking to a distributor interface including information relating to at least one supplier. At least one supplier link is additionally depicted on each distributor interface in operation 4836 with each supplier link capable of linking to a supplier interface.

25 In an aspect, all of the interfaces may be written in hypertext mark-up language. In another aspect, the information may identify the distributors and the suppliers. In an additional aspect, the link may include a hyperlink. In a further aspect, the linking may require the entry of an identification code.

30 **Supply Chain Coordinator Web Site/Portal**

In an embodiment of the present invention, a supply chain coordinator web site may be provided to allow users easy access to specific information that relates to their role in the restaurant management system.

5 In one embodiment, users may be registered with the supply chain management system. Upon registration, the user may then be able to access and partake some or all of the features of the supply chain management system. The users can be registered based on information regarding pre-existing relationships, based on new information, etc. Actual registration may be accomplished manually, via telephone, or online for example. Some
10 illustrative registration information that can be collected may include, for example:

- Identification of the user
- User contact information
- User function
- Goods/Service Provider
- 15 • Client/Customer
- Billing/Payment Status

The users may be assigned to specific user groups based on their function. Some
20 exemplary user groups include:

- Retail Outlet Members (e.g., Franchisees, Stores, etc.)
- Suppliers
- Distributors
- Retail Outlet Managers
- 25 • Retail Outlet Management Corporation
- Supply Chain Coordinator

In addition, users may be linked to the specific retailers, distribution centers and Areas of Direct Influence (ADI's) with which they are involved.

30

Figure 49 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary supply chain coordinator web site start page 4900 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In a preferred embodiment, the supply chain coordinator web site start page 4900 is accessible via the Internet/World Wide Web. In such an embodiment, any Internet user can get to the supply chain coordinator web site start page. However, preferably, only a user with a valid pre-established user identification can log in to the site. The user identification (user name and password) assigns the user to the appropriate user group and links this user to the appropriate retail outlets, distribution centers and ADI's.

Convenient links to other web sites (e.g., a retail management corporation web site such as, for example, the Burger King Corporation web site, or the National Franchise Association web site) may be included on the supply chain coordinator start page.

In a preferred embodiment, to access the appropriate home page for a specific user group, the user may enter the designated user name 4902 and password 4904 in the log in section near the top of the start page and enters the appropriate site.

Figure 50 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary supply chain coordinator Members' Front Page 5000 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. For supply chain coordinator Members, this front page 5000 may be a personalized with the user's name and a timely business reminder 5002 being displayed on the page. A side panel 5004 identifies the user group to which the user belongs and lists those options and reports available to the user. This information may also be displayed in a frame of the page. As illustrated in Figure 50, some exemplary options/reports that may be displayed in the front page 5000 include:

- Local Promotions 5006 - Contains options specific to those involved with local promotions including adding a new ADI promotion, creating a new promotion and viewing current and historical summary of promotions by ADI
- Franchisee 5008 - Contains options specific to franchisees including the electronic versions of the Red Book and the supply chain coordinator Technology Guide to POS Systems

- Reports **5010** - Allows the user access to a list of reports that provide a wide range of information and enable users to perform their jobs more efficiently.
- Personal Info **5012** - Allows users to maintain their passwords and to view and update their contact information.
- 5 • Legal **5014** - Contains details regarding the terms under which supply chain coordinator operates this site and users' obligations in using the site.

Figure **51** is a flowchart of a process **5130** for providing a supplier interface. Utilizing a network, data is received from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation **5132**. This data relates to an amount of goods sold by the stores. The data is aggregated in a
 10 database in operation **5134**. Subsequently, a request is received from a supplier which includes a plurality of supplier parameters in operation **5136**. Information from the database relevant to the supplier parameters is extracted in response to the request in operation **5138** and the information from the database is transmitted to the supplier utilizing the network in operation **5140**. Also, a supply of raw materials from which the
 15 goods are produced is adjusted based on the information in operation **5142**. Note also that the amount/rate of finishing goods and/or supplies can be adjusted based on the information.

In an aspect, the parameters relate to a forecasted amount of the required goods. In
 20 another aspect, the network includes the Internet. In a further aspect, the information is displayed utilizing a network-based interface. In one aspect, the stores include restaurants.

Figure **52** is a flowchart of a process **5230** for providing a distributor interface. Data is
 25 received from a plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a network in operation **5232**. This data relates to an amount of goods sold by the stores and is aggregated in a database in operation **5234**. Upon receiving a request which includes a plurality of distributor parameters from a distributor in operation **5236**, information is extracted in operation **5238** from the database relevant to the distributor parameters in response to the
 30 request. The information is then transmitted from the database to the distributor utilizing

the network in operation **5240** and an amount of raw materials purchased in correlation to the production of the goods is adjusted based on the information in operation **5242**.

In an aspect, the parameters relate to a forecasted amount of the required goods to be delivered to the stores. In another aspect, the network includes the Internet. In a further aspect, the information is displayed utilizing a network-based interface. In an additional aspect, the stores include restaurants.

Figure **53** is a schematic illustration of an exemplary POS Implied Daily Usage – Distributor report **5300** that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. This report provides distribution centers and supply chain coordinator with timely retail outlet sales information, here of a restaurant. This report **5300** uses menu items sales data collected daily from a sample of restaurants served by each distribution center, and recipes for each menu item, to calculate the estimated usage of each inventory item at the distribution center level. In calculating the data, average per restaurant unit sales of each menu item may be computed based on the restaurants sampled and are then multiplied by the total number of restaurants served to determine implied total sales by menu item.

This report **5300** may also include a daily total for each inventory item for the past 14 days and weekly totals for the 4 weeks prior to the 14 days, as well as a calculation of prior day usage as a percentage of average daily usage for the past 14 days. In a preferred embodiment, this report **5300** may be recalculated daily. For example, in an exemplary, a report containing the prior day's sales can be available after 3 PM on the following business day.

Another report that may be displayed via the supply chain coordinator web site is a service level report which lists each distribution center's fill rate, on-time percentage and the percentage of perfect orders. The service level report may also indicate how the fill rate, on-time and perfect order for each distribution center compare to the minimum standards set by supply chain coordinator and restaurant management corporation.

Figure 54 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary local promotion summary – by distribution center report 5400 that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. This report 5400 provides a summary of all local promotional activity for a distribution center. For each local promotion, the report 5400 may list each participating ADI, the date the promotion started in that ADI, the projected daily sales of the promotional menu item, per restaurant (or other retailer), for the ADI, and how many weeks the promotion will run in that ADI.

The local promotion summary – by distribution center report 5400 may also show how many restaurants in the ADI, which are served by the distribution center, are participating in the promotion, and lists the specific restaurant management company's restaurant numbers for restaurants not participating in the promotion (see "Non-Participating Restaurants" column).

Figure 55 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary POS implied daily usage - supplier report 5500 that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. This report 5500 provides timely restaurant sales information based on actual restaurant sales to suppliers, supply chain coordinator and supply chain coordinator members. The POS implied daily usage - supplier report 5500 may also use menu item sales data collected daily from a sample of restaurants served by each distribution center, and recipes for each menu item, to calculate the estimated usage of each inventory item provided by the supplier. Usage may be calculated and presented at the distribution center level and totaled by FOB point.

In calculating the data, the average per restaurant unit sales of each menu item are computed based on the restaurants sampled, and then multiplied by the total number of restaurants served to determine implied total sales by menu item. The report 5500 may include:

- a daily total for each inventory item for the past 14 days
- weekly totals for the 4 weeks prior to the 14 days

- a calculation of prior day usage as a percentage of average daily usage for the past 14 days

In a preferred embodiment, the POS implied daily usage - supplier report **5500** may be recalculated daily. For example, a report containing the prior day's sales can be available after 3 PM on the following business day.

Another report that may be displayed via the supply chain coordinator web site is an average restaurant daily POS sales report which provides average restaurant daily menu item sales grouped by category and indicates the changes from a prior period. In a preferred embodiment, this report may be recalculated daily. For example, an average restaurant daily POS sales report containing the prior day's sales can be available after 3 PM on the following business day from the day the information was obtained.

Figure **56** is a schematic illustration of an exemplary restaurant landed cost verification report **5600** that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The purpose of the restaurant landed cost verification report **5600** is to inform restaurant operators, for products negotiated by supply chain coordinator, of the contract prices at their back door. In an exemplary embodiment, this report may list:

- the inventory item supplied by the distribution center with the distribution center's cost (see "DC Cost" column)
- the markup amount supply chain coordinator negotiated on behalf of the franchisee (see "Markup" column) and
- the resulting total landed cost as of a specified date (see "Rest Cost" column).

In a preferred embodiment, only inventory items that supply chain coordinator purchases are included. Also, if a franchisee has not appointed supply chain coordinator as supply chain manager, only the distribution center cost will be available in the report and the franchisee may add the mark up as per the franchisee's contract with the distributor. Like the other reports available via the supply chain coordinator web site, the restaurant landed

cost verification report 5600 may be recalculated daily and may be printed at any time for any date.

Figure 57 is a flowchart of a process 5730 for navigating a user in a network-based supply chain management interface. A plurality of stores, distributors and suppliers of a supply chain are registered utilizing the Internet in operation 5732. Each of the stores, distributors and suppliers is assigned an identifier in operation 5734. When a request (which includes an identifier) is received from a user for access to a database utilizing a first web-page in operation 5736, the user is identified as a store, distributor and/or supplier using the identifier in operation 5738. A second web-page is displayed if the user is identified as a store. A third web-page is displayed if the user is identified as a distributor. A fourth web-page is displayed if the user is identified as a supplier (see operation 5740).

This provides a degree of confidentiality among competitors who are supply chain participants. Because many of the participants may need to disclose trade secrets to the supply chain manager, such as prices, sources of raw materials, and quantity data, they may be wary of joining. By providing a separate interface on a per-participant basis, trade secrets are protected, and competitors are more likely to join. Further, this avoids antitrust issues, as sales information can be kept secret to all but the supply chain coordinator.

In one aspect, the database may include data representative of sales by the stores. As another aspect, the database may include data representative of goods ordered by the stores. As an additional aspect, the database may include data representative of goods delivered by the distributors. As a further aspect, the database may include data representative of goods in an inventory of the suppliers. Also, the data may be displayed in each of the web-pages utilizing the Internet.

The following sections describe the secure Integrated Supply Chain web portal. The secure web-enabled integrated supply chain portal allows supply chain management to offer supply chain services within a member community.

5 The sub-sections that follow describe the security process recommendations, policies, functionality, system requirements, user communities, and technical and organizational issues that need to be addressed during the subsequent design, development and implementation phases.

10 The specifications contained herein express the Integrated Supply Chain web portal preferred Critical-To-Quality (CTQ) factors. One skilled in the art will appreciate that actual implementation of the requirements may differ from that described without straying from the scope of the invention, as the CTQ criteria may evolve and adapt to market conditions or other influences on their strategic vision and direction.

15 The recommendations include major functional requirements, interfaces, and infrastructure as well as the non-functional requirements (systems and organizational attributes). It includes functional and system needs.

20 **Integrated Supply Chain Web Portal**

One goal of the present invention is to enhance Supply Chain management services to improve the efficiency of their member's supply chain.

25 The underlying concept of electronic commerce (EC) is to use information to displace time and cost in the supply chain. The Integrated Supply Chain Management system (ISCM) portal functions as the electronic commerce facilitator in the supply chain by efficiently collecting, transporting, transforming and sharing information across the enterprise.

30

Figure 58 depicts a high level view of ISCM communications according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention. The ISCM 5800 provide two capabilities. The first is to distribute consumption and forecast data to the supply chain participants (franchisees 5802, distributors 5804, suppliers 5806, and raw material suppliers 5808) that can use it to effective plan purchases and inventory. The second is to automate restaurant ordering (food and packing, equipment and promotions, etc.).

The process works as follows. Restaurants send detailed menu sales information to the ISCM each day from their point of sale (POS) registers. The POS data is converted from menu sales data to material usage data. Specifically a recipe or bill of materials is used to convert each menu item into its purchased components (e.g. bun, meat, wrapper, etc.). The usage data is made available to the supply chain via the ISCM portal. The data is made available to the portal community in the following forms. Distributors see the daily usage of the materials they supply to the restaurants they service. Additionally this usage will be broken down by their distribution center locations. Suppliers see the daily usage of the products/commodities that they supply to the distributors who service the restaurants. Additionally this usage will be broken down by their plant locations. The franchisee and individual restaurants can view sales in the contexts of material usage.

The restaurants can enter orders and send them to the distributor electronically via the ISCM portal. This information enables the entire supply chain to better plan inventory stocking levels and replenishments. This improved planning results in several supply chain efficiencies and benefits. Waste, obsolescence and carrying costs that result from excessive inventories are reduced. The amount of lost sales that result from inventories that are inadequate to meet demand is reduced. Fewer emergency and expedited orders are created. Advanced shipment planning is enabled, which results in lower freight and transportation costs.

The electronic ordering capability enables the restaurants to reduce the costs and times associated with preparing, submitting and receiving orders.

The ISCM system can be enhanced with additional capabilities that serve to further increase the efficiency of the supply chain. These may include electronic invoicing, electronic funds transfer to pay invoices, evaluated receipt settlement, bar coding, and tracking capabilities.

5

Figure 59 is a flowchart of a process 5930 for tracking the shipment of goods in a network-based supply chain management framework utilizing barcodes. In general, a distributor is sent an order for goods from a supply chain participant utilizing a network in operation 5932. The goods are then tracked utilizing a bar code in operation 5934.

10

The results of the tracking are stored in a database in operation 5936 so that the supply chain participant can be allowed to access the results of the tracking utilizing a network with TCP/IP protocol in operation 5938.

15

In one aspect of the present invention, the barcode is attached at the start of the process so that a common barcode is used throughout the shipping process. However, barcodes can also be attached at other points in the process if desired.

20

In an aspect, the network may include the Internet. In another aspect, the results may be accessible utilizing a network-based interface. In a further aspect, the supply chain participant may comprise a restaurant. In one aspect, the supply chain participant may be allowed access only after an identity thereof is verified. In an additional aspect, the goods may have the bar code adhered thereto.

25

ISCM Access and Security Perspective

System management becomes more complicated when security and access management are added to it. They expand the role of ISCM portal to include the function of enterprise gatekeeper in addition to that of information distribution facilitator.

30

The underlying concepts of electronic commerce (EC), and security and access management are somewhat at odds. EC makes the supply chain more efficient by

facilitating the flow information throughout the enterprise. Security and access management on the other hand, restricts access and the flow of information. They may be some of the evils that are needed to prevent outsiders from accessing the system and its data, prevent unauthorized users from performing restricted activities, and preserve
5 privacy within the enterprise by limiting data access to a need to know basis.

Although security is an ingredient to the electronic commerce business model, it has a price that can be measured in direct out of pocket costs, ease of use, flexibility, administration overhead, and system maintenance and flexibility. The greater the
10 protection against unauthorized access and use, the greater the cost of the system and the cost of using the system.

Regarding ease of user, the greater the security of a system the harder it is to use. For example, a security arrangement that requires different passwords to access each sub-
15 function of a system would be very secure. On the other hand it would be perceived by its end users as inefficient and hard to use because of the many passwords that are needed. The end users would prefer a less secure single log on that provides them access to all the functions and data in a system.

20 In an EC community that is populated by several different players, flexibility in specifying access privileges is important. This due to the fact that the access arrangements can accommodate different functions (e.g. franchisees, distributors, suppliers, the supply chain coordinator, retail management, etc.) and different organizations within a given function. The more flexible the system, the easier it is for
25 the users to adapt it to their organization. However, the price of flexibility in this area is either less security (simplicity) or greater complexity and system development and maintenance costs.

The greater the security of a system, the greater the administrative effort needed to setup
30 users and to maintain security. Additionally the administrative effort becomes more

complex as greater security is required and the complexity (effort) increases over time as the system ages.

Complex systems are inflexible and difficult to enhance and maintain. Security makes systems complex in two ways. First, through the introduction of the programs/modules needed to protect the system. Second, by introducing code that attempts to insulate the end user from security (i.e. provide high security without sacrificing flexibility, ease of use, etc.). Insulating complexity can become very pervasive and expensive. As systems grow and expand, the users should be insulated across new modules, features and data views in a fashion consistent with the original approach. This can be difficult when 3rd party software is used or when a new feature does not conform to some earlier assumptions regarding users or system structure.

Security challenges the designers of EC systems to provide a level of security that is appropriate for the system's data and users while minimizing the direct and indirect costs of security that were just discussed. Additionally, the designer may try to anticipate the future growth and the expansion of the EC system so that its security architecture can easily accommodate new features, users and data.

Figure 60 illustrates the ISCM in the context of security and access management. The ISCM System shown in Figure 60 offers several security challenges.

The user community is comprised of several entities. These include retail outlets 6002, franchisees 6004, distributors 6006, suppliers 6008, the supply chain coordinator 6010 and retailer management 6012. Security attributes and domains need to be established for each entity. Administrative procedures and programs need to be provided to establish and maintain the security attributes and domains of each of these differing entities.

Security management for data access will be complex because data is shared across the community. A single data item (e.g. daily beef usage for a restaurant) can belong to several domains (e.g. restaurant (retailer), franchisee, distributor, supplier, etc.).

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The electronic ordering capability enables the restaurants to reduce the costs and times associated with preparing, submitting and receiving orders.

The following sections describe the secure Integrated Supply Chain web portal. The secure web-enabled integrated supply chain portal allows supply chain management to offer supply chain services within a member community.

5 The sub-sections that follow describe the security process recommendations, policies, functionality, system requirements, user communities, and technical and organizational issues that need to be addressed during the subsequent design, development and implementation phases.

10 The specifications contained herein express the Integrated Supply Chain web portal preferred Critical-To-Quality (CTQ) factors. One skilled in the art will appreciate that actual implementation of the requirements may differ from that described without straying from the scope of the invention, as the CTQ criteria may evolve and adapt to market conditions or other influences on their strategic vision and direction.

15 The recommendations include major functional requirements, interfaces, and infrastructure as well as the non-functional requirements (systems and organizational attributes). It includes functional and system needs.

20 **Integrated Supply Chain Web Portal**

One goal of the present invention is to enhance Supply Chain management services to improve the efficiency of their member's supply chain.

25 The underlying concept of electronic commerce (EC) is to use information to displace time and cost in the supply chain. The Integrated Supply Chain Management system (ISCM) portal functions as the electronic commerce facilitator in the supply chain by efficiently collecting, transporting, transforming and sharing information across the enterprise.

30

cost verification report 5600 may be recalculated daily and may be printed at any time for any date.

Figure 57 is a flowchart of a process 5730 for navigating a user in a network-based supply chain management interface. A plurality of stores, distributors and suppliers of a supply chain are registered utilizing the Internet in operation 5732. Each of the stores, distributors and suppliers is assigned an identifier in operation 5734. When a request (which includes an identifier) is received from a user for access to a database utilizing a first web-page in operation 5736, the user is identified as a store, distributor and/or supplier using the identifier in operation 5738. A second web-page is displayed if the user is identified as a store. A third web-page is displayed if the user is identified as a distributor. A fourth web-page is displayed if the user is identified as a supplier (see operation 5740).

This provides a degree of confidentiality among competitors who are supply chain participants. Because many of the participants may need to disclose trade secrets to the supply chain manager, such as prices, sources of raw materials, and quantity data, they may be wary of joining. By providing a separate interface on a per-participant basis, trade secrets are protected, and competitors are more likely to join. Further, this avoids antitrust issues, as sales information can be kept secret to all but the supply chain coordinator.

In one aspect, the database may include data representative of sales by the stores. As another aspect, the database may include data representative of goods ordered by the stores. As an additional aspect, the database may include data representative of goods delivered by the distributors. As a further aspect, the database may include data representative of goods in an inventory of the suppliers. Also, the data may be displayed in each of the web-pages utilizing the Internet.

- a calculation of prior day usage as a percentage of average daily usage for the past 14 days

In a preferred embodiment, the POS implied daily usage - supplier report **5500** may be recalculated daily. For example, a report containing the prior day's sales can be available after 3 PM on the following business day.

Another report that may be displayed via the supply chain coordinator web site is an average restaurant daily POS sales report which provides average restaurant daily menu item sales grouped by category and indicates the changes from a prior period. In a preferred embodiment, this report may be recalculated daily. For example, an average restaurant daily POS sales report containing the prior day's sales can be available after 3 PM on the following business day from the day the information was obtained.

Figure **56** is a schematic illustration of an exemplary restaurant landed cost verification report **5600** that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The purpose of the restaurant landed cost verification report **5600** is to inform restaurant operators, for products negotiated by supply chain coordinator, of the contract prices at their back door. In an exemplary embodiment, this report may list:

- the inventory item supplied by the distribution center with the distribution center's cost (see "DC Cost" column)
- the markup amount supply chain coordinator negotiated on behalf of the franchisee (see "Markup" column) and
- the resulting total landed cost as of a specified date (see "Rest Cost" column).

In a preferred embodiment, only inventory items that supply chain coordinator purchases are included. Also, if a franchisee has not appointed supply chain coordinator as supply chain manager, only the distribution center cost will be available in the report and the franchisee may add the mark up as per the franchisee's contract with the distributor. Like the other reports available via the supply chain coordinator web site, the restaurant landed

Figure 54 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary local promotion summary – by distribution center report 5400 that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. This report 5400 provides a summary of all local promotional activity for a distribution center. For each local promotion, the report 5400 may list each participating ADI, the date the promotion started in that ADI, the projected daily sales of the promotional menu item, per restaurant (or other retailer), for the ADI, and how many weeks the promotion will run in that ADI.

The local promotion summary – by distribution center report 5400 may also show how many restaurants in the ADI, which are served by the distribution center, are participating in the promotion, and lists the specific restaurant management company's restaurant numbers for restaurants not participating in the promotion (see "Non-Participating Restaurants" column).

Figure 55 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary POS implied daily usage - supplier report 5500 that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. This report 5500 provides timely restaurant sales information based on actual restaurant sales to suppliers, supply chain coordinator and supply chain coordinator members. The POS implied daily usage - supplier report 5500 may also use menu item sales data collected daily from a sample of restaurants served by each distribution center, and recipes for each menu item, to calculate the estimated usage of each inventory item provided by the supplier. Usage may be calculated and presented at the distribution center level and totaled by FOB point.

In calculating the data, the average per restaurant unit sales of each menu item are computed based on the restaurants sampled, and then multiplied by the total number of restaurants served to determine implied total sales by menu item. The report 5500 may include:

- a daily total for each inventory item for the past 14 days
- weekly totals for the 4 weeks prior to the 14 days

the network in operation **5240** and an amount of raw materials purchased in correlation to the production of the goods is adjusted based on the information in operation **5242**.

In an aspect, the parameters relate to a forecasted amount of the required goods to be delivered to the stores. In another aspect, the network includes the Internet. In a further aspect, the information is displayed utilizing a network-based interface. In an additional aspect, the stores include restaurants.

Figure **53** is a schematic illustration of an exemplary POS Implied Daily Usage – Distributor report **5300** that may be displayed in the supply chain coordinator web site in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. This report provides distribution centers and supply chain coordinator with timely retail outlet sales information, here of a restaurant. This report **5300** uses menu items sales data collected daily from a sample of restaurants served by each distribution center, and recipes for each menu item, to calculate the estimated usage of each inventory item at the distribution center level. In calculating the data, average per restaurant unit sales of each menu item may be computed based on the restaurants sampled and are then multiplied by the total number of restaurants served to determine implied total sales by menu item.

This report **5300** may also include a daily total for each inventory item for the past 14 days and weekly totals for the 4 weeks prior to the 14 days, as well as a calculation of prior day usage as a percentage of average daily usage for the past 14 days. In a preferred embodiment, this report **5300** may be recalculated daily. For example, in an exemplary, a report containing the prior day's sales can be available after 3 PM on the following business day.

Another report that may be displayed via the supply chain coordinator web site is a service level report which lists each distribution center's fill rate, on-time percentage and the percentage of perfect orders. The service level report may also indicate how the fill rate, on-time and perfect order for each distribution center compare to the minimum standards set by supply chain coordinator and restaurant management corporation.

- Reports **5010** - Allows the user access to a list of reports that provide a wide range of information and enable users to perform their jobs more efficiently.
- Personal Info **5012** - Allows users to maintain their passwords and to view and update their contact information.
- 5 • Legal **5014** - Contains details regarding the terms under which supply chain coordinator operates this site and users' obligations in using the site.

Figure **51** is a flowchart of a process **5130** for providing a supplier interface. Utilizing a network, data is received from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation **5132**. This data relates to an amount of goods sold by the stores. The data is aggregated in a database in operation **5134**. Subsequently, a request is received from a supplier which includes a plurality of supplier parameters in operation **5136**. Information from the database relevant to the supplier parameters is extracted in response to the request in operation **5138** and the information from the database is transmitted to the supplier utilizing the network in operation **5140**. Also, a supply of raw materials from which the goods are produced is adjusted based on the information in operation **5142**. Note also that the amount/rate of finishing goods and/or supplies can be adjusted based on the information.

In an aspect, the parameters relate to a forecasted amount of the required goods. In another aspect, the network includes the Internet. In a further aspect, the information is displayed utilizing a network-based interface. In one aspect, the stores include restaurants.

Figure **52** is a flowchart of a process **5230** for providing a distributor interface. Data is received from a plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a network in operation **5232**. This data relates to an amount of goods sold by the stores and is aggregated in a database in operation **5234**. Upon receiving a request which includes a plurality of distributor parameters from a distributor in operation **5236**, information is extracted in operation **5238** from the database relevant to the distributor parameters in response to the request. The information is then transmitted from the database to the distributor utilizing

Figure 49 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary supply chain coordinator web site start page 4900 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In a preferred embodiment, the supply chain coordinator web site start page 4900 is accessible via the Internet/World Wide Web. In such an embodiment, any Internet user can get to the supply chain coordinator web site start page. However, preferably, only a user with a valid pre-established user identification can log in to the site. The user identification (user name and password) assigns the user to the appropriate user group and links this user to the appropriate retail outlets, distribution centers and ADI's.

Convenient links to other web sites (e.g., a retail management corporation web site such as, for example, the Burger King Corporation web site, or the National Franchise Association web site) may be included on the supply chain coordinator start page.

In a preferred embodiment, to access the appropriate home page for a specific user group, the user may enter the designated user name 4902 and password 4904 in the log in section near the top of the start page and enters the appropriate site.

Figure 50 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary supply chain coordinator Members' Front Page 5000 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. For supply chain coordinator Members, this front page 5000 may be a personalized with the user's name and a timely business reminder 5002 being displayed on the page. A side panel 5004 identifies the user group to which the user belongs and lists those options and reports available to the user. This information may also be displayed in a frame of the page. As illustrated in Figure 50, some exemplary options/reports that may be displayed in the front page 5000 include:

- Local Promotions 5006 - Contains options specific to those involved with local promotions including adding a new ADI promotion, creating a new promotion and viewing current and historical summary of promotions by ADI
- Franchisee 5008 - Contains options specific to franchisees including the electronic versions of the Red Book and the supply chain coordinator Technology Guide to POS Systems

In an embodiment of the present invention, a supply chain coordinator web site may be provided to allow users easy access to specific information that relates to their role in the restaurant management system.

5 In one embodiment, users may be registered with the supply chain management system. Upon registration, the user may then be able to access and partake some or all of the features of the supply chain management system. The users can be registered based on information regarding pre-existing relationships, based on new information, etc. Actual registration may be accomplished manually, via telephone, or online for example. Some
10 illustrative registration information that can be collected may include, for example:

- Identification of the user
- User contact information
- User function
- Goods/Service Provider
- 15 • Client/Customer
- Billing/Payment Status

The users may be assigned to specific user groups based on their function. Some
20 exemplary user groups include:

- Retail Outlet Members (e.g., Franchisees, Stores, etc.)
- Suppliers
- Distributors
- Retail Outlet Managers
- 25 • Retail Outlet Management Corporation
- Supply Chain Coordinator

In addition, users may be linked to the specific retailers, distribution centers and Areas of Direct Influence (ADI's) with which they are involved.

30

The variety of user communities and the organizational variations that are found within each create a challenge to provide a flexible sub administrative capability that will enable user organizations to manage their own domains.

5

The security challenges and the tradeoffs created by them will be covered in detail in the technical design and recommendation sections.

User Characteristics

10

User Relationships

Figure 61 sets forth the members of the ISCM community 6100 and their relationship. From an operational perspective the ISCM community is made up of management members, member retailers, distributors and suppliers. The supply chain coordinator manages the community from both a goods and services and information perspectives.

15

The community member relationships can be characterized as follows. Supply chain management gives distributors 6102 the exclusive right to supply all retailers 6104 in the distributor's geographic territory. Retailers order from their assigned distributor. Retailer management approves commodity suppliers 6106. Supply chain management specifies the approved commodity suppliers that each distributor will use. Distributors replenish their inventories by ordering supplies from the suppliers designated by supply chain management.

20

25

The purpose of the following sub-sections is to look at the members of the supply chain community in terms of member characteristics (supply chain role that is performed by each member and how each member is organized to perform their role) and members personnel who will likely interact with ISCM. Member domains that will form the basis for security and access management are also defined.

30

User Organizations

Supply Chain Management

The supply chain coordinator manages the supply chain for their member's retailers. Its services include:

Negotiating supplier agreements on behalf of their members.

Negotiating distributor agreements on behalf of their members. Distributors are given exclusive rights to supply retailers in a given geography. Distributor agreements specify territory, retail outlets, items supplied, suppliers, delivery requirements and quality requirements.

Overseeing and managing the supply chain process to insure consistent and high quality performance.

Providing an ISCM web portal that will make the supply chain more efficient and will enable the members of the supply chain to run their businesses better.

The functions in the following table interact with ISCM:

Table 2

User Function	Description
System administrator	Person who has access to all of the users and capabilities of ISCM. Responsible for creating, modifying and deleting members, distributors and suppliers.
Member administrator	Person who has access to all of the members users of ISCM. Responsible for providing the information for setting up and maintaining members and their domains. Also responsible for providing access to member data to non-member users (e.g.

User Function	Description
	SCC, NFA, RM).
Distributor administrator	Person who has access to all of the distributor users of ISCM. Responsible for providing the information for setting up and maintaining distributors and their domains. Also responsible for providing access to distributor data to non-distributor users (e.g. distributor contract negotiator).
Supplier administrator	Person who has access to all of the supplier users of ISCM. Responsible for providing the information for setting up and maintaining suppliers and their domains. Also responsible for providing access to supplier data to non-supplier users (e.g. supplier contract negotiator).
Operations support / manager	Person has access to system audit log and system operational reports. Responsible identifying things such as attempts to gain unauthorized access, abnormal usage patterns, system bottlenecks, etc.
Help desk	Person(s) responsible for supporting the user community when they have questions or encounter difficulties.

Figure 62 is a flowchart of a process 6230 for selecting suppliers in a supply chain management framework. A network is utilized in operation 6232 to receive data from at least one store of a supply chain that relates to the sale of goods by the at least one store.

- 5 An electronic order form is generated based on the data for ordering goods from a distributor of the supply chain in operation 6234. Supplier information is received from a management headquarters utilizing the network in operation 6236. The supplier information includes a plurality of suppliers selected to supply the store with the goods. The supplier information is then used to transmit the electronic order form to the selected
- 10 suppliers of the supply chain utilizing the network in operation 6238.

In one aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the electronic order form is generated by the at least one store. In a further aspect, the electronic order form

is generated by the distributor. In an additional aspect, the suppliers are selected using the data. In yet another aspect, the suppliers are selected using performance information collected regarding the suppliers.

5 Members

The members are franchisees who own one to several hundred retail outlets. They also are the owners of the supply chain coordinator cooperative and as such, they are the primary focus ISCM from efficiency and cost reduction points of view.

10

In the initial form of ISCM, members perform three functions. They create retailer orders and send them to distributors for processing. They provide daily POS data to supply chain management, who will then enhance it and provide it to members, distributors and supplier on an aggregated basis to assist them in planning inventories and purchases.

15

Also, they retrieve and view orders, and enhanced sales history data.

20

The member organizations that ISCM can support vary from a single level organization to ones that can contain as many as four levels. The structure depends on the nature of the business entity (sole proprietorship, partnership or corporation), the size (number of retail outlets) and the preferences of the owner/CEO/board/partners. The structure impacts ISCM as it dictates the number (width and depth) of data domain levels that ISCM supports. Figure 63 illustrates a multi-level, complex member organization 6300. The table below illustrates ISCM user functions. Looking to the Usage Type, an Active User uses ISCM in the course of doing their daily job. A Passive User may use ISCM information; doesn't need it to do job.

25

Table 3

User Function	Usage Type	Description
Administrator	Active	Responsible for adding, modifying and

User Function	Usage Type	Description
		deleting users in their distributor domain. Sets access permissions for users in their domains.
Corporation/owner/partner: <i>CEO</i> <i>VP of marketing</i> <i>VP of development</i> <i>CFO</i> <i>VP of operations</i>	Passive	View forecasts, and historical sales and usage for corporate level and sub domains below corporate.
Area staff: <i>VP</i> <i>Director of OPS</i> <i>Marketing manager</i>	Passive	View forecasts, and historical sales and usage for area level and sub domains below area.
District managers	Passive	View forecasts, and historical sales and usage for district level and sub domains below district.
Restaurant managers	Active	View orders, forecasts, and historical sales and usage for restaurant.
Order preparer	Active	View orders, forecasts, and historical sales and usage for restaurant. Enter orders for restaurants.

Distributors

5 Distributors are middlemen with whom the supply chain coordinator has contracted to supply all member retailers in a given geography.

Distributor supply chain services include:

- Receive, pick, pack and ship retailer orders as specified by the terms and conditions of a supply chain agreement.
- 5 • Invoice shipped retailer orders as specified by the terms and conditions of the supply chain agreement.
- 10 • Provide warehouse storage space for inventory levels that are sufficient to service the retailers in their geography as specified by the terms and conditions of the supply chain agreement.
- Provide storage environments (e.g. refrigeration) that are needed to maintain the quality of the items they supply to the retailers in their geography.
- 15 • Maintain inventory levels that are sufficient to supply retailers as specified by the terms and conditions of the supply chain agreement.
- Replenish inventories by buying from approved and/or pre-specified suppliers.

20 The distributors serve a large geography. As a result, they have several strategically located distribution centers throughout their territory. These distribution centers maintain local inventories and service retailers in their locale to reduce transportation time and costs.

25 Functions such as sales, accounting, billing, customer service, are generally centralized at a headquarters location.

The supply chain coordinator's contracts with distributors specify:

- 30 • Service levels that cover things like order cycle times, commodity quality, etc.
- Retailers served by the distributor.
- Distribution center that services each retailer.

- Items/commodities that the distributors will carry in their inventory for the retailers.
- Suppliers and supplier plant that will be used to provide each item that will be carried by each distribution center for the retailers they service.

5

Figure 64 is a flowchart of a process 6430 for contract enforcement in a supply chain management framework in which data is collected from a plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a network in operation 6432. Next, a network-based interface is displayed for allowing access to the data in operation 6434. An electronic order form is then generated in operation 6436 based on the data utilizing the network-based interface for ordering goods from a distributor of the supply chain, the electronic order including a contact with terms of a delivery of the goods. Information relating to the delivery and/or costs of the goods is tracked utilizing the network in operation 6438 and the tracked information is compared with the terms of the contract in operation 6440.

10

15

In one aspect, the information relates to a timeliness of delivery of the goods. In another aspect, the information relates to a quality of the goods delivered by the distributor. In a further aspect, the information relates to a price of the goods delivered by the distributor. In an additional aspect, an alert is sent upon the comparison indicating a discrepancy between the tracked information and the terms of the contract. In such an aspect, the alert may be made available on the network-based interface.

20

The following table lists distributor functions that may interact with ISCM:

25

Table 4

User Function	Usage Type	Description
Administrator	Active	Responsible for adding, modifying and deleting users in their distributor domain. Sets access permissions for users in their domains.

User Function	Usage Type	Description
Headquarters: CEO/GM Marketing Procurement Credit Accounts receivable Accounts payable	Passive	View orders, forecasts, and historical sales and usage for corporate level and distribution centers below corporate level.
Customer Service QA	Active	View orders for all distribution centers to deal with retailers question/issues
Account executive	Active	Distributor point of contact for the supply chain coordinator. View orders, forecasts, and historical sales and usage for corporate level and distribution centers below corporate level.
Contract manager	Active	View orders, forecasts, and historical sales and usage for corporate level and distribution centers below corporate level.
Distribution Center: DC buyer	Active	View forecasts, and historical sales and usage by supplier for DC. Uses information to plan purchases
Transportation manager	Active	View orders and forecasts to schedule trucks and determine routes.
Order pickers	Active	View individual orders to pick them
Shipping	Active	View individual orders to pack and ship them.

Usage Type: Active User uses ISCM in the course of doing their daily job.

Passive User may use ISCM information; doesn't need it to do job.

Figure 65 is a flowchart of a process 6530 for monitoring distributor activity in a supply chain management framework. Data is received in operation 6532 from at least one store of a supply chain utilizing a network. This data relates to the sale of goods by the store. Electronic order forms are generated in operation 6534 based on the data for ordering goods from a plurality of distributors of the supply chain. The generated electronic order forms are sent to the distributors in operation 6536 so that the goods are delivered to the stores. The electronic order forms for each of the distributors are compared for monitoring the reliance of the store on each distributor in operation 6538.

In one aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the electronic order forms are generated by the at least one store. In a further aspect, the comparison is accessible utilizing a network-based interface. In an additional aspect, the electronic order forms indicate a type of the goods, an amount of goods, and a target delivery date of the goods. In another aspect, the comparison is used to gauge a performance of the distributors.

Suppliers

Suppliers produce the items that the retailers buy from the distributors. Distributors replenish their inventories with bulk purchases from suppliers.

All suppliers are approved by retail outlet management. The supply chain coordinator negotiates agreements with suppliers on behalf of their members. Distributors can utilize supply chain coordinator-specified suppliers to service the restraints.

Large national/regional suppliers will have several production/processing facilities around the country. The facilities that will supply the distributors are inspected and approved by retailer management. The supply chain coordinator can specify the supplier facility that will be used to replenish each distributor distribution center.

The following table has supplier functions that may interact with ISCM:

Table 5

User Function	Usage Type	Description
Administrator	Active	Responsible for adding, modifying and deleting users in their supplier domain. Sets access permissions for users in their domains.
Headquarters: Marketing Procurement Credit Accounts receivable Accounts payable	Passive	View item forecasts and historical sales and usage for corporate level and for plants below corporate level.
Account executive	Active	Supplier point of contact for the supply chain coordinator. View item forecasts and historical sales and usage for corporate level and for plants below corporate level.
Plant: Production planner		View item forecasts, and historical sales and usage. Use to plan production.
Buyer	Active	View item forecasts, and historical sales and usage. Use to plan production material purchasing.
Transportation manager	Active	View item forecasts, and historical sales and usage. Use to plan transportation.

Usage Type: Active User uses ISCM in the course of doing their daily job.

Passive User may use ISCM information; doesn't need it to do job.

5

Figure 66 is a flowchart of a process 6630 for monitoring supplier activity in a supply chain management framework. Data relating to the sale of goods is received from at least one store of a supply chain utilizing a network in operation 6632. Electronic order forms

are generated based on the data for ordering goods from a plurality of suppliers of the supply chain in operation 6634. The electronic order forms are sent to the suppliers so that the goods are supplied to the stores in operation 6636. The electronic order forms for each of the suppliers are then compared for monitoring the reliance of the store on each supplier in operation 6638.

In one aspect, the network includes the Internet. In another aspect, the electronic order forms are generated by the at least one store. In a further aspect, the comparison is accessible utilizing a network-based interface. In yet another aspect, the electronic order forms indicate a type of the goods and an amount of goods. In an additional aspect, the comparison is used to gauge a performance of the suppliers.

User Relationship Domains for Access and Reporting

The following table depicts the domains for access and reporting for members, distributors and suppliers.

Table 6

Member	Member Area District Retailer Item Quantity
Distributor	Distributor (order) Distribution center Retailer Item Quantity Distributor (usage)

	Item Distribution center Supplier Supplier plant Item Quantity
Supplier	Supplier Plant Item Quantity

Figure 67 is a flowchart of a process 6730 for a bulletin board feature in a supply chain management framework. Utilizing a network, data is collected from a plurality of stores of a supply chain in operation 6732. A network-based interface is also displayed for allowing access to the data in operation 6734. An electronic order form is generated in operation 6736 based on the data utilizing the network-based interface for ordering goods from selected distributors of the supply chain. The network-based interface includes a bulletin board displaying information received from each of the stores. The received information relates to the distributors for facilitating the selection of the distributors.

In one aspect, the information relates to a timeliness of deliveries made by the distributors. In another aspect, the information relates to a quality of the goods delivered by the distributors. In a further aspect, the information relates to a price of the goods delivered by the distributors. In an additional aspect, a store from which the information is received is identified. As another aspect, the store from which the information is received may be identified utilizing an electronic mail address for communication purposes.

Figure 68 is a flowchart of a process 6830 for a catalog feature in a supply chain management framework. Data is collected utilizing a network in operation 6832 from a plurality of stores of a supply chain. A network-based interface is displayed in operation

6834 for allowing access to the data. An electronic order form is subsequently generated
in operation 6836 based on the data utilizing the network-based interface for ordering
goods from a distributor of the supply chain or a supplier of the supply chain if the goods
are not distributed through a distributor. The network-based interface includes a virtual
5 catalog to facilitate the generation of the electronic order form.

In an aspect, the catalog displays a plurality of raw products from which the goods are
produced. In such an aspect, the catalog may display a plurality of distributors from
which the raw products can be ordered. As a further aspect, the catalog may also display
10 a comparison of performance of the distributors. As an additional aspect, the
performance may be calculated based on the data. In an another aspect, the catalog may
include links to additional network-based interfaces relating to suppliers.

Critical To Quality Requirements

Overview

When defining the features and functionality of a newly designed system, it is
recommended to begin with the actual business needs of the users of the web portal. It
20 has already been defined in the section entitled **User Characteristics** that the users of the
web portal will be managing and maintaining many if not all of the security
administrative aspects of the system.

It is important to gather and understand the business needs for each user community and
25 then translate those needs into actual Critical To Quality (CTQ) requirements. To obtain
these CTQs, each user group supplied their own Voice Of the Customer (VOC) demands
upon the system.

The VOCs are then mapped into high level categories that ultimately map to desired
30 features and functional requirements (discussed in the section entitled **Functional**
Requirements, below).

The overall approach uses a six sigma consulting methodology 6900 for mapping customers directly to solution design and is outlined in the Figure 69.

- 5 Using this approach, it is possible to design a system solution that ties directly back to the core customer groups and their business needs. Features and high level functional requirements are the core to system design, and using the Six Sigma consulting methodology maintains the integrity of the original business needs as presented by the key stakeholders for the web portal.

10

The next set of sections will detail the specific VOCs and CTQs that were collected in the workshop sessions. These CTQs will then be tied to the features and functional requirements as outlined in the section entitled **Functional Requirements**, below.

15 **Voice Of the Customer (VOC)**

Each of the core customer communities as outlined in the section entitled **User Characteristics** were interviewed to collect their VOCs in relation to a web security model. Each workshop discussed potential portal applications and their functionality, providing a back drop for the potential security needs of the system. The following table lists all of the VOCs collected at each workshop, and places them into high level categories.

20

Table 7

25

	Voice of the Customer	SCC	Member	Supplier Distributor
1.	Securely isolate data and functions to prevent unauthorized access.			
	Isolate my data	X		
	My data for my eyes only	X		

	Voice of the Customer	SCC	Member	Supplier Distributor
	Insure my data is safe	X		
	Want to feel the system is secure		X	
	Assume a high level of security; keep competitors out		X	X
	Ability to perform password administration and manage accounts	X	X	X
	Access right/password changes must be granted immediately.		X	
	System should require periodic password changes for all accounts			X
	Make it difficult for someone to take data directly to a competitor			X
2.	Security is simple from an end user's perspective.			
	Make it quick and easy	X		
	Give me a single logon with multiple community access.	X	X	
	Ability to select access rights for all levels		X	
	If you make it too difficult to access we won't want to bother accessing it.			X
3.	Security administration is simple from a user perspective			
	Make maintenance simple		X	
4.	Access management administration is very flexible.			
	Give me a single logon with multiple community access.	X	X	
	Ability to select access rights for all levels		X	

	Voice of the Customer	SCC	Member	Supplier Distributor
	Simultaneous/reciprocal access		X	
	Be able to select individuals to set up access to his/her group			X
	Various levels would have varying degrees of password change enforcement			X
	We need multiple levels of security access			X
	Single individuals may have multiple owner organizations			X
	I need flexibility			X
5.	System proactively monitors for potential security breaches.			
	I want the system to take preventative measures		X	
	We should be able to detect that something isn't right		X	
	We want an audit trail of some sort			X
	Incident tracking capability; especially for inappropriate use.			X
6.	Reports are available that enable community administrator to effectively manage and maintain security and access.			
	Tell me who is using the SCC web site	X		
	Show me who is using the system for my organization	X		
	Who has done what to my data?		X	
	I want reporting functionality for audits.		X	
	We should be able to detect that something isn't right		X	

	Voice of the Customer	SCC	Member	Supplier Distributor
	We want an audit trail of some sort			X
	Want to track information flow			X
	Need to know who has access			X
	Need to have detailed information available to determine who went where when.			X
	Incident tracking capability; especially for inappropriate use.			X
7.	System does not create cost or incremental effort for the supply chain community			
	Don't waste time on the Internet	X		
	No incremental cost	X	X	X
	Don't disrupt my business operations		X	
	I don't want to hire anyone for support or administration		X	
	I'm concerned about information overload			X
	Target the information and give me what I need to know.			X
	This is supposed to represent cost savings			X
8.	Effective training and documentation			
	Create a common nomenclature (classification and roles)			X
	Training concerns			X
9.	Integrate with existing systems			
	Single sign-on	X	X	
	One location "one-stop-shop"		X	

CTQs

The VOCs identify most of the security concerns for each user community. These statements are then assessed to fall into distinct and measurable requirements, the critical to quality factors for each of the stated issues.

- 5 The following table outlines how each of the high level VOCs categories map to specific CTQ requirements and these items will ultimately map to the desired features and functionality of the security system.

Table 8

	Voice of the Customer	CTQ
1.	Securely isolate data and functions to prevent unauthorized access.	Security, Prevention
2.	Security is simple from an end user's perspective.	Simplicity
3.	Security administration is simple from a user perspective	Simplicity, Ease of Use
4.	Access management administration is very flexible.	Flexibility
5.	System proactively monitors for potential security breaches.	Reporting, Prevention
6.	Reports are available that enable community administrator to effectively manage and maintain security and access.	Reporting, Simplicity, Prevention
7.	System does not create cost or incremental effort for the supply chain community	Cost
8.	Effective training and documentation	Simplicity
9.	Integrate with existing systems	Integration,

	Voice of the Customer	CTQ
		Simplicity

Business Processes

5 **Overview**

Any security model will require certain business processes and procedures to maintain the integrity and ease of use. This section outlines some business processes that need to be in place to begin implementation.

10

The next section, entitled **Policy Requirements**, will further identify specify policies that surround and govern aspects of these processes. It is important to note that these procedures need to be assigned clearly to responsible parties, and the policies outlined in the Section entitled **Policy Requirements** (below) should be clearly provided in order to maintain system integrity.

15

Adding and Deleting Users

The first procedure that needs to be addressed is how to add and delete users to the system. Users are defined as an individual who requires access to applications and data on the web portal. This process should be replicated throughout the domains and user communities, always managed by a specifically named administrator role (see Administration below).

20

25 **Adding New Users**

The sequence of steps for adding a user begins with authorization:

1. Request for new user account
2. Request verified by administrator, notification sent to user's manager
3. Authorization of new account provided
4. Reference to policy for access rights and privileges for the requested class of user
- 5 5. Configure access levels
6. Send new user ID and default password to new user
7. Confirm successful logon and password change at first logon

These steps can exist at all user community levels, and also for providing administrator access, such as from the supply chain coordinator corporate to a Member organization. It is important to provide an authorization step before creating an account, so that the administrator is also monitored for security purposes.

Deleting Existing Users

The sequence of steps for deleting a user requires similar authorization:

1. Request for deleting an existing account
2. Request verified by administrator, notification sent to user's manager
3. Authorization for deleting account provided
4. Reference to policy for deleting access rights and privileges for the requested class of user
5. Delete user account
6. Send verification of deletion to user's manager
7. Confirm successful deletion by attempting administrator logon

The confirmation of deletion may be a useful step, as security breaches are most likely to occur from an improperly deleted account. The supply chain coordinator should require all levels of security management to provide verification of deleted accounts, especially in the member and supplier/distributor communities.

Changing Key Contact Administrator

At times the key contact administrator within a domain organization may change. While the process of adding a new user as an administrator follows the same process as adding a new user, there are a few additional kick-off steps that initiate the process. The key contact in this process is not the account contact (not the Member owner, or supplier contact person), but is in fact the web portal administrator for that organization.

1. Supplier/Distributor/Member notifies the supply chain coordinator account manager of change in key contact.
2. The account manager validates change via phone call to Supplier/Distributor/Member
3. Upon verification, the account manager notifies the supply chain coordinator administrator of new key contact information
4. The administrator suspends user account rights and privileges
5. The administrator sets up new user account with organization administration rights according to access policy guidelines
6. Notify new administrator of new user ID and default password
7. Confirm successful logon and password change at first logon

When the key contact for the security system changes at a domain organization, it is not likely that the supply chain coordinator administrator will be directly notified of the change. That is why it is useful for the account manager to verify the change, and obtain the new user information and submit the request. This process ensures that the administrator is acting upon an authorized and verified request. The process may be audited to trace where the authorization initiated, in the event a false transfer of rights is made.

Auditing and Monitoring

This section describes in detail the procedures to follow for auditing and monitoring the security system usage. What to collect, how to collect it, and how to preserve the integrity of the audit data are all useful procedures for maintaining proper and effective security measures.

5

Data to Collect

Figure 70 is a flowchart of a process 7030 for electronic invoice auditing in a supply chain management framework. Utilizing a network, data is collected in operation 7032 from a plurality of stores of a supply chain that relates to the sale of goods by the stores. Access to the data is allowed utilizing a network-based interface in operation 7034. Electronic order forms are generated in operation 7036 based on the data for ordering goods from a plurality of distributors of the supply chain. The generated electronic order forms are sent to the distributors utilizing the network in operation 7038. Subsequently, invoices are received from the distributors utilizing the network in operation 7040 and the invoices are compared with the electronic order forms for auditing the invoices in operation 7042.

In one aspect, the electronic order forms include a price of the goods. In another aspect, a price of the goods is calculated from the electronic order forms. In such an aspect, the price of the goods may be calculated from the electronic order forms utilizing a table mapping a plurality of goods with a plurality of prices. In further aspect, the electronic order forms are generated by the stores. In an additional aspect, an alert is generated upon a discrepancy being found during the comparison.

Audit data should include any attempt to achieve a different security level by any person, process, or other entity in the network. This information includes login and logout, super user access (administrator rights), and any other change of access or status. The processes outlined previously include a fair amount of authorization and verification steps—these steps are important to create cross domain, cross organizational audit trails.

The actual data to collect may differ for the different types of applications and different types of access changes made within the portal. In general, the information to collect includes:

- 5 • Username, for login and logouts
- Previous and new access rights, to track changes to access
- Timestamp

One very important note: Do not gather passwords. There is an enormous potential for security breach if the audit records are improperly accessed. Do not gather incorrect passwords either, as they often differ from the correct passwords by only a single character or transposition.

Collection Process

There are basically three ways to store audit records:

1. Read / write file on a host
2. Write-once / read-many device (CD-ROM or tape drive)
- 20 3. Write-only device (e.g. line printer)

File system logging is also the least reliable method. If the logging host has been compromised, the file system is usually the first thing to go—and an intruder could easily cover up traces of the intrusion.

Collecting audit data on a write-once device is slightly more effort to configure than a simple file, but it has the significant advantage of greatly increased security because an intruder could not alter the data showing that an intrusion has occurred. The disadvantage of this method is the need to maintain a supply of storage media and the cost of that media. Also, the data may not be instantly available.

Line printer logging is useful in system where permanent and immediate logs are required. A real time system is an example of this, where the exact point of a failure or attack may be recorded. A laser printer, or other device that buffers data (e.g., a print server), may suffer from lost data if buffers contain the needed data at a critical instant.

- 5 The disadvantage of, literally, "paper trails" is the need to keep the printer fed and the need to scan records by hand. There is also the issue of where to store the, potentially, enormous volume of paper that may be generated.

For each of the logging methods described, there is also the issue of securing the path
10 between the device generating the log and actual logging device (i.e., the file server, tape/CD-ROM drive, printer). If that path is compromised, logging can be stopped. In an ideal world, the logging device would be directly attached by a single, simple, point-to-point cable. Since that is usually impractical, the path may pass through the minimum number of networks and routers.

15 If the supply chain coordinator selects an outsourced host for the security system, these options can be optimized against security breaches. Keeping this audit collection process in-house would require effort to secure the various options for maintaining audit data integrity, detailed further in the following sub-section.

20 Preserving Audit Data

Audit data should be some of the most carefully secured data at the site and in the
25 backups. If an intruder were to gain access to audit logs, the systems themselves, in addition to the data would be at risk.

Audit data may also become useful to the investigation, apprehension, and prosecution of the perpetrator of an incident. If a data handling plan is not adequately defined prior to an incident, it may mean that there is no recourse in the aftermath of an event, and it may
30 create liability resulting from improper treatment of the data.

Legal Considerations

Due to the content of audit data, there are a number of legal questions that arise which might need to be addressed by legal counsel. As the Supply Chain management system collects and saves audit data, it needs to be prepared for consequences resulting both from its existence and its content.

One area concerns the privacy of individuals. In certain instances, audit data may contain personal information. Searching through the data, even for a routine check of the system's security, could represent an invasion of privacy. The privacy policy outlined in the **Policy Requirements** section (below) should clearly outline procedures that guarantee privacy of an individual user, both in terms of existing contracts (such as between members and retailer management) and also other existing legal regulations.

A second area of concern involves knowledge of intrusive behavior originating from the web portal. If an organization keeps audit data, is it responsible for examining it to search for incidents? If a host in one organization is used as a launching point for an attack against another organization, can the second organization use the audit data of the first organization to prove negligence on the part of that organization?

Security Incident Handling

The operative philosophy in the event of a breach of web security is to react according to a plan. This is true whether the breach is the result of an external intruder attack, unintentional damage, a student testing some new program to exploit vulnerability, or a disgruntled employee. Each of the possible types of events, such as those just listed, should be addressed in advance by adequate contingency plans.

Traditional web security, while quite important in the overall site security plan, usually pays little attention to how to actually handle an attack once one occurs. When an attack is in progress, many decisions are made in haste and can be damaging while tracking

down the source of the incident, collecting evidence to be used in prosecution efforts, preparing for the recovery of the system, and protecting the valuable data contained on the system.

- 5 One of the most important, and often overlooked, benefits for efficient incident handling is an economic one. Having both technical and managerial personnel respond to an incident requires considerable resources. If trained to handle incidents efficiently, less staff time is required when one occurs.
- 10 Another benefit is related to public relations. News about computer security incidents tends to be damaging to an organization's stature among current or potential clients. Efficient incident handling minimizes the potential for negative exposure. In the member community it is important to maintain good public relations with retail management, suppliers, and distributors in the interest of positive supply chain collaboration.
- 15 A final benefit of efficient incident handling is related to legal issues. It is possible that in the near future organizations may be held responsible because one of their nodes was used to launch a network attack. In a similar vein, people who develop patches or workarounds may be sued if the patches or workarounds are ineffective, resulting in
- 20 compromise of the systems, or, if the patches or workarounds themselves damage systems. Knowing about operating system vulnerabilities and patterns of attacks, and then taking appropriate measures to counter these potential threats may be helpful in circumventing possible legal problems.
- 25 This section will outline and discuss the following areas of incident handling:
- Notification
 - Identifying an Incident
 - Law Enforcement and Legislative Agencies
 - Internal and External Communications
 - Containment
- 30

- On-going Activities

Notification

- 5 It is important to establish contacts with various personnel before a real incident occurs. These contacts should include local managers and system administrators, administrative contacts for other domain organizations, and various investigative organizations.

- 10 For each type of communication contact, specific "Points of Contact" (POC) should be defined. These may be technical or administrative in nature and may include legal or investigative agencies as well as service providers and vendors. When establishing these contacts, it is important to decide how much information will be shared with each class of contact. It is especially important to define, ahead of time, what information will be shared with the users at a site, with the public (including the press), and with other sites.

- 15 A list of contacts in each of these categories is an important time saver for the key contact individuals during an incident. It can be quite difficult to find an appropriate person during an incident when many urgent events are ongoing. It is strongly recommended that all relevant telephone numbers (also electronic mail addresses and fax numbers) be included in the site security policy. The names and contact information of all individuals who will be directly involved in the handling of an incident should be placed at the top of this list.

Identifying an Incident

- 25 When an incident occurs, the first step is to identify if it truly is a security incident. Most signs of virus infection, system intrusions, malicious users, etc., are simply anomalies such as hardware failures or suspicious system/user behavior. To assist in identifying whether there really is an incident, it is usually helpful to obtain and use any detection software that may be available. Audit information is also extremely useful, especially in determining whether there is a network attack.

It is extremely important to obtain a system snapshot as soon as one suspects that something is wrong. Many incidents cause a dynamic chain of events to occur, and an initial system snapshot may be the most valuable tool for identifying the problem and any source of attack. Finally, it is important to start a log book. Recording system events, access to data, time stamps, etc., may lead to a more rapid and systematic identification of the problem, and is the basis for subsequent stages of incident handling.

There are certain indications or "symptoms" of an incident that deserve special attention:

1. System crashes.
2. New user accounts (unusual or non-precedent nomenclature, or high activity on a previously low usage account)
3. New files created (usually with strange file names, such as data.xx or *.xx).
4. Accounting discrepancies
5. Changes in file lengths or dates without proper authorization
6. Attempts to write to system without authorization
7. Data modification or deletion (complaints that files or data start to disappear)
8. Denial of service
9. Unexplained, poor system performance
10. Anomalies (e.g. frequent and unexplained "beeps").
11. Suspicious probes (there are numerous unsuccessful login attempts)
12. Suspicious browsing (someone accesses file after file on many user accounts.)
13. Inability of a user to log in due to modifications of his/her account.

This list is not comprehensive, but does highlight some common indicators of security incidents. It is recommended to collaborate with other technical and web security personnel to make a decision as a group about whether an incident is occurring.

Law Enforcement and Investigative Agencies

In the event of an incident with legal consequences, it is important to establish contact with investigative agencies (e.g., the FBI and Secret Service in the U.S.) as soon as possible. It should be acknowledged that the supply chain coordinator and its user community organizations may have its own local and governmental laws and regulations that will impact how they interact with law enforcement and investigative agencies. The security policies and procedures need to identify those potential differences to help the various domain organizations follow consistent incident response methods.

The supply chain coordinator should notify legal counsel soon after knowledge of an incident is in progress. At a minimum, legal counsel needs to be involved to protect the legal and financial interests of the web portal and subsequent member organizations.

There are many legal and practical issues, a few of which are:

1. Negative publicity—Is the supply chain coordinator willing to risk negative publicity or exposure to cooperate with legal prosecution efforts.
2. Downstream liability—Leaving a compromised system as is so it can be monitored while allowing access that causes damage on a downstream system may force liability on the supply chain coordinator for damages incurred.
3. Distribution of information—If the supply chain coordinator web portal distributes information about an attack in which another site or organization may be involved or the vulnerability in a product that may affect ability to market that product, the supply chain coordinator may again be liable for any damages (including damage of reputation).
4. Liabilities due to monitoring—the supply chain coordinator may be sued if users at its site or elsewhere discover that the web portal is monitoring account activity without informing users.

There are no clear precedents yet on the liabilities or responsibilities of organizations involved in a security incident or who might be involved in supporting an investigative effort. Investigators will often encourage organizations to help trace and monitor intruders. Indeed, most investigators cannot pursue computer intrusions without extensive

support from the organizations involved. However, investigators cannot provide protection from liability claims, and these kinds of efforts may drag on for months and may take a lot of effort.

5 On the other hand, an organization's legal council may advise extreme caution and suggest that tracing activities be halted and an intruder shut out of the system. This, in itself, may not provide protection from liability, and may prevent investigators from identifying the perpetrator.

10 The balance between supporting investigative activity and limiting liability is tricky. the supply chain coordinator should consider the advice of legal counsel and the damage the intruder is causing (if any) when making the decision about what to do during any particular incident.

15 Internal and External Communications

It is crucial during a major incident to communicate why certain actions are being taken, and how the users (or departments) are expected to behave. In particular, it should be made very clear to users what they are allowed to say (and not say) to the outside world (including other departments). For example, it would not be good for an organization if users replied to customers with something like, "I'm sorry the systems are down, we've had an intruder and we are trying to clean things up." It would be much better if they were instructed to respond with a prepared statement like, "I'm sorry our systems are unavailable, they are being maintained for better service in the future."

25

Communications with customers and contract partners should be handled in a sensible, but sensitive way. One can prepare for the main issues by preparing a checklist. When an incident occurs, the checklist can be used with the addition of a sentence or two for the specific circumstances of the incident.

30

One of the most important issues to consider is when, who, and how much to release to the general public through the press. The public relations office is trained in the type and wording of information released, and will help to assure that the image of the site is protected during and after the incident (if possible). A public relations office has the advantage that one can communicate candidly with them, and provide a buffer between the constant press attention and the need of the POC to maintain control over the incident.

If a public relations office is not available, the information released to the press can be carefully considered. If the information is sensitive, it may be advantageous to provide only minimal or overview information to the press. It is possible that any information provided to the press will be quickly reviewed by the perpetrator of the incident. Also note that misleading the press may backfire and cause more damage than releasing sensitive information.

Some guidelines to keep in mind are:

1. Provide low levels of technical detail.

Detailed information about the incident may provide enough information for others to launch similar attacks on other sites, or even damage the site's ability to prosecute the guilty party once the event is over.

2. Do not speculate.

Speculation of who is causing the incident or the motives are very likely to be in error and may cause an inflamed view of the incident.

3. Cooperate with law enforcement.

Work with law enforcement professionals to assure that evidence is protected. If prosecution is involved, assure that the evidence collected is not divulged to the press.

4. Maintain focus on containment and recovery.

Do not allow the press attention to detract from the handling of the event. It is of primary importance to contain the incident and begin recovery efforts.

5 Containment

The purpose of containment is to limit the extent of an attack. A part of containment is decision making (e.g., determining whether to shut a system down, disconnect from a network, monitor system or network activity, set traps, disable functions such as remote file transfer, etc.).

Sometimes this decision is trivial; shut the system down if the information is classified, sensitive, or proprietary. Removing all access while an incident is in progress obviously notifies all users, including the alleged problem users, that the administrators are aware of a problem; this may have a deleterious effect on an investigation. In some cases, it is prudent to remove all access or functionality as soon as possible, then restore normal operation in limited stages. In other cases, it is worthwhile to risk some damage to the system if keeping the system up might enable identification of an intruder.

The supply chain coordinator should define acceptable risks in dealing with an incident, and should prescribe specific actions and strategies accordingly. If features and functionality need to be shut town temporarily, there should be a notification process as well as a back-up (non-web based) process to continue normal business operations. As application functionality is implemented into the web portal, each web feature needs to address the potential for shutdown.

On-going Activities

There are a number of steps the supply chain coordinator should implement to keep up with changes in web security. The following is a list of activities to include for continual incident tracking and handling measures:

1. Subscribe to advisories that are issued by various security incident response teams, like those of the CERT Coordination Center, and update systems against those threats that apply to the supply chain coordinator's web portal technology.

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2. Monitor security patches that are produced by the vendors of equipment, software, applications, and third party affiliates, and obtain and install all that apply.

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3. Actively watch the configurations of the supply chain coordinator systems to identify any changes that may have occurred, and investigate all anomalies.

4. Review all security policies and procedures annually (at a minimum).

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5. Regularly check for compliance with policies and procedures. This audit should be performed by someone other than the people who define or implement the policies and procedures.

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Policy Requirements

Overview

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Web Portal security policies are designed to address security issues within an Internet community. The supply chain coordinator needs a guide to setting computer security policies and procedures for sites that have systems on the Internet—and may need to also address sites and systems that are not yet connected to the Internet.

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The web portal team will need to make many decisions, gain agreement and then communicate and implement these security policies. The focus of this section is on the

policies and procedures that need to be in place in order to support the technical security features of the ISC web portal.

The basic approach to developing a security policy plan for a web portal follows

5 traditional protection rules for overall system security [Fites, 1989 Control and Security of Computer Information Systems]:

1. Identify what you are trying to protect
2. Determine what you are trying to protect it from
- 10 3. Determine how likely the threats are
4. Implement measures which will protect your assets in a cost-effective manner
5. Review the process continuously; make improvements each time a weakness is found

15 Using approach, the supply chain coordinator will be able to continually identify critical assets and required policies throughout the implementation phase for both the security system, as well as future releases of functionality for the web portal.

Setting Goals for A Security Policy

20 The types of security-related decisions that are made, or the failure to make them, largely determine how secure or insecure the web portal will be, how much functionality the portal will offer, and how easy the portal is to use. To effectively use security tools and policies, the supply chain coordinator may determine its security goals clearly.

25 Trade-offs exist when defining goals, as outlined here:

- Services Offered vs. Security Provided

30 Each service offered to users carries its own security risks. For some services the risk outweighs the benefit of the service, and the administrator may choose to eliminate the service, rather than try to secure it.

- Ease of Use vs. Security

The easiest system to use would allow access to any user and require no passwords; that is, there would be no security. Requiring passwords makes the system a little less convenient, but more secure. Requiring device-generated one-time passwords (e.g. secure id tokens), makes the system even more difficult to use, but much more secure.

- Cost of Security vs. Risk of Loss

There are many different costs to security: Monetary, Performance, and Ease of Use. There are also many levels of risk: Loss of Privacy, Loss of Data, and Loss of Service. Each type of cost can be weighed against each type of loss for optimization.

the supply chain coordinator goals should be communicated to all users, operations staff, and managers through a set of security rules, called a “security policy.” The scope of this policy includes all types of information technology as well as the information stored and manipulated by the technology.

Purpose of A Security Policy

The main purpose of a security policy is to inform users, staff and managers of their obligatory requirements for protecting technology and information assets. The policy should specify the mechanisms through which these requirements may be met. Another purpose is to provide a baseline from which to acquire, configure and audit systems and networks for compliance with the policy. Therefore an attempt to use a set of security tools in the absence of at least an implied security policy is meaningless.

Assets and Threats

The cost of protecting oneself against a threat should be less than the cost of recovering if the threat were to strike. Cost in this context should include losses expressed in real currency, reputation, and trustworthiness. Without reasonable knowledge of what one is protecting and what the likely threats are, following this rule of cost-effectiveness may be difficult.

It is recommended that as the supply chain coordinator designs and implements additional functionality to their ISC web portal, they examine the extent of security levels and features in relation to the value of the assets involved. There are two elements of risk analysis that one should consider:

1. Identifying the assets
2. Identifying the threats

Identifying the Assets

Figure 71 is a flowchart of a process 7130 for providing a network-based supply chain interface capable of maintaining the anonymity of supply chain participants in the supply chain. Data is received via a network from a plurality of supply chain participants of a supply chain in operation 7132. Each of the supply chain participants is assigned with an identifier in operation 7134 and the data for each of the supply chain participants is listed utilizing the identifier to preserve the anonymity of the supply chain participants in operation 7136.

In an aspect, the network may include the Internet. In another aspect, the identifier may include a numeric string. In a further aspect, the identifier may indicate a region where the associated store is located. In an additional aspect, the data may be listed utilizing a network-based interface. In one aspect, the supply chain participants may include restaurants.

For each asset, the basic goals of security are availability, confidentiality, and integrity. Each threat should be examined considering how it may affect these areas. The first step for asset protection is to identify all of the things that need protection. The point is to list all things that could be affected by a security problem. Again, a traditional list for system protection is applicable in the Internet arena:

- Hardware: boards, keyboards, workstations, personal computers, printers, communication lines, servers, routers
- Software: source programs, object programs, utilities, diagnostic programs, operating systems, communication programs
- Data: during execution, stored on-line, archived off-line, backups, audit logs, databases, in transit over communication media
- People: users, administrators, hardware maintainers
- Documentation: on programs, hardware, systems, local administrative procedures
- Supplies: paper, forms, ribbons, magnetic media

The supply chain coordinator should use the preliminary goals and objectives for the ISC web portal to identify the primary assets. Existing procedures and policies for system protection is a good starting point to begin the process for asset identification.

Once identified, it is important to note the differing levels of importance for each of these categories to the users of the portal. For example, a member may hold his or her hardware assets at a higher protection value than a supplier, who may have leased assets or complete warranty and maintenance coverage. Documentation for procedures may have higher value for the administrators at the supply chain coordinator corporate, and